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THIRD

ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

BOARD OF EDUCATION.

TOGETHER WITH THE

THIRD ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

SECRETARY OF THE BOARD.



**Boston:**

DUTTON AND WENTWORTH, STATE PRINTERS.

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1840.

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1839

**Commonwealth of Massachusetts.**

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IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, Jan. 31, 1840.

*Ordered*, That the report of the Board of Education, be read to the House; and referred, together with the reports of their Secretary and Treasurer, to the Committee on Education, with instructions to cause four thousand copies of the same to be printed.

L. S. CUSHING, *Clerk.*



THIRD ANNUAL REPORT  
OF THE  
BOARD OF EDUCATION.

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The Board of Education, in obedience to the law of the 20th April, 1837, beg leave to submit to the Legislature their Third Annual Report.

The conventions directed by law to be attended by the Secretary of the Board in each county of the Commonwealth, have been duly held. The presence of Teachers, of the members of School Committees, and of the friends of education, generally, at these meetings, is, of course, voluntary, and must, therefore, vary with circumstances. At several of the conventions, there has been a gratifying attendance. Discussions on important subjects connected with education, have been had at these meetings. Among the most prominent subjects considered, have been the education of children in factories ; and the supply of books well adapted for the wants of the people, generally, and especially of the young. These discussions have, in many cases, been sustained in a manner, which evinces deep interest in the subjects considered. At the several county conventions, addresses were delivered by the Secretary of the Board, on the *necessity* of education, as a prepara-

tion for all the great personal and social duties. It is believed that, by the various exercises at these meetings, an increase of zeal has been produced, in that part of the community, to which we must most directly look for the improvement of our Schools.

The influence proceeding from these conventions, is regarded as one of the most important instruments, which can be employed, for raising the standard of Common School Education. The great majority of the people unquestionably entertain proper feelings on the subject. They prize education as they ought, and wish their children to enjoy its advantages. Where the condition of the Schools is bad, and manifestly inadequate to the due preparation of the young, for the duties of life, (as far as that preparation is to be acquired at places of education), it may be presumed to result, in most cases, from ignorance of what has been accomplished in other parts of the Commonwealth, and might be effected in all, by proper exertions on the part of those, to whom this important trust is confided by law. Inasmuch as zeal on this subject is almost sure to follow in the train of intelligence, the Board know of no agency which can more safely be relied upon to awaken and sustain the proper interest, than public meetings in every part of the Commonwealth, at which the friends and conductors of education may have the opportunity of communicating to each other and the public, the results of their experience and observations. Such assemblies are entirely in accordance with the character of our political institutions, which aim to effect the great objects of human society, as far as possible, by the voluntary action of the people; and which look to the government only, for such measure of aid and organization, as is needed to

call into the highest action the enlightened sense of the community. It is confidently believed, that the manner in which the county conventions have been attended, the character of the addresses, discussions, and proceedings, and the influences they have been calculated to exercise, are such and such only as were desired and intended by the Legislature, in passing the law which makes it the duty of the Secretary to be present. No sectarian or party interest, has, in any single case, been manifested ; and those attending the meetings have come together as on ground common to every good citizen. It may be regarded as by no means one of the least beneficial results of holding these conventions, that they unite in an object of permanent and sacred interest, all those who, however alienated from each other in reference to other topics of public concernment, take a lively and a common interest in the welfare of the rising generation.

In the course of the past year, the Normal schools or seminaries for the qualification of teachers, at Lexington and Barre, have gone into operation. The board refer to their last annual report for the detail of the steps taken, in the location of these institutions. As it was very important to secure the highest attainable degree of qualification, in the immediate superintendence of these schools, much time was unavoidably required for the selection and appointment of instructors. The arrangements for the school at Lexington, were first completed, by the choice of Mr. Cyrus Pierce, who, at the time of his election, was engaged with uncommon success, as principal of the public school at Nantucket. The Normal school at Lexington, it will be recollected, was exclusively designed for females, and as it went into

operation at a season of the year, (the month of July,) when female teachers are generally under engagement in schools, the attendance the first term was not large. This circumstance, however, was the less to be regretted, as it enabled the principal of the school to proceed in its organization, with the caution desirable in an institution of a novel character in this country. After a vacation of two weeks the second term commenced about the middle of October, with a considerably increased attendance. The present number of pupils is twenty-one. At the same time, a model school connected with the institution, was put into operation. This is a school attended by thirty pupils of both sexes, between the ages of six and ten years, gathered from the several school districts in the town. This school is under the general superintendence of the principal of the Normal school but is taught by the pupils of that institution. It is visited every day by the principal as a listener and observer, and occasion for remark is taken on the manner in which the duty of instruction is performed by the pupils of the Normal school. Occasionally the principal instructs the model school in the presence of all the pupils of the Normal school, who consequently have the benefit of his example. The establishment of the model school is understood to have been very favorably viewed by the community, and a much larger number of children could have been obtained for it, had it been practicable to receive more to advantage.

The Normal school, at Barre, went into operation on the 4th of September, under the superintendence of Mr. S. P. Newman, who had for many years filled with reputation the office of a professor in Bowdoin college, in the state of Maine. The school at Barre, for reasons



intimated in the last annual report, was opened for males and females, and thirty-nine pupils attended during the term. The resort was so great, that it was found necessary to employ an assistant teacher ; but as the schools kept for females are generally opened in the spring, and as the larger part of the pupils are of that sex, it is presumed that a reduction of numbers will take place at the third term.

It is supposed that a main cause, why the resort of pupils at Barre has been greater than at Lexington, is to be found in the circumstances, that both sexes have been admitted at Barre, and females only at Lexington ; and that pupils have been received for a single term at the former place and not at the latter. The course pursued on the first point, as was explained in the Report of the Board the last year, has been in conformity with what was understood to be the public preference in the two places. The same reason existed for permitting a shorter term at Barre, united with a wish to ascertain, by the practical operation of the two plans, which will be entitled to preference as the permanent rule. The Board is strongly inclined to the opinion, that a year at least should be passed at the Normal schools by each pupil ; but it may be found on trial, that the advantages of a shorter term are sufficient to outweigh the obvious objections to it. A model school has not yet been organized at Barre ; but it is proposed to connect one with the Normal school, as soon as the requisite arrangements, for that purpose, can be effected.

The Board express themselves with entire approbation of the Institutions at Lexington and Barre, with respect both to the fidelity with which instruction has been dispensed, and the disposition and capacity of the greater

portion of the pupils. They feel that a degree of success of the most gratifying character has been realized, in both institutions. At an expense to the Commonwealth of less than \$1,000, for the past year, two seminaries for the qualification of teachers have been organized in commodious buildings,—with adequate libraries, and apparatus,—and under the superintendence of experienced and distinguished instructors. The combination of circumstances which has produced so desirable a result, by the application of so moderate a sum from the treasury, must be considered as an event peculiarly auspicious to the cause of education.

The instructions given in the Normal schools have, under the regulations adopted by the Board, been directed to the two great objects of an institution for the qualification of teachers, viz. 1st, to impart to the pupils a more correct and thorough knowledge of the various branches required by law to be taught in our schools, and 2d, to teach the principles of communicating instruction, both in theory, and in practice at a model school to be connected with the main institution.

The importance of these two branches of instruction, and their connexion with each other, in a seminary for the qualification of teachers, is too obvious to require an elaborate explanation. Few persons, who have been called to the performance of the duty of a member of a school committee, can have failed to observe, that of those who offer themselves as teachers, a large number are destitute of an accurate and thorough acquaintance with the various branches of knowledge, required by law to be taught in the schools. They neither read nor write well ;—are deficient in the science of numbers ;—and have an imperfect knowledge of the grammar of our

language ;—but they have a foundation in all these branches. It is not to be expected, that a majority of the district school teachers in the State can afford the time for a very long and thorough revision of the branches of knowledge, which they are required to teach. But it is nevertheless true, that much may be learned, even in a short time, passed with that particular object in view, in an institution expressly devoted to that object, and at an age when the mind has attained some maturity, and the moral motives to diligence are powerfully felt. There can be no doubt, it is believed, in the mind of any person practically acquainted with the subject, that if, of two persons of equal capacity, possessing beforehand the usual average proficiency in the branches to be taught, one should immediately take charge of a school, without any previous preparation, and the other should devote even so short a period as three months to a diligent review of all those branches,—a review to be made under the direction and with the aid of an accomplished and faithful instructor,—the advantage would be greatly on the side of the last, in commencing his duties as a teacher.

But the art of instruction, that is of communicating knowledge to the youthful mind and aiding and encouraging its own efforts ; the art of governing a school, or rather of so forming and influencing it, as to supersede the necessity of that mixture of harsh discipline and capricious indulgence which is called government, is also one of great difficulty and importance. It has its principles, which lie deep in the philosophy of our nature. Some of the best talent in several countries, for the last generation, has been employed in elucidating these principles. To comprehend them thoroughly, and

with the ability to apply them practically, is the endowment of a gifted few. A thoroughly accomplished teacher is as rarely to be met with, as an individual of the highest merit in any of the professions, or other most responsible callings in life. If these considerations in one view of the subject should lead us to despair of furnishing many of our schools with teachers of this description, they should lead us directly to the conclusion, that for the practice of such an art some specific preparation is far better than none. The preparation may be inadequate, but nothing is so bad as wholly to want preparation. Of two individuals, otherwise equally well qualified, and proposing to engage in the business of teaching school, if one should enter upon his duties, without any special instruction in them, and no guide but his own judgment, and the recollections of his own experience at school, (possibly an indifferent school,) while the other should pass even so short a period as three months in an institution exclusively for the qualification of teachers, where he should be carefully instructed in the principles of teaching and governing a school, can there be a doubt that the latter would be in a condition to give by far the greatest aid and encouragement to his pupils ?

These strong and obvious considerations have, in other countries, led to the adoption of Normal schools, as a part of the regular system of public instruction, and it would seem that they are as decisive of the question of the utility of such institutions in America as in Europe. They are the considerations, it is presumed, which led the Legislature promptly to engage in the experiment now in progress, and on which the attention of the friends of education throughout the country is anxiously



fixed. The board ask permission, in closing this part of their report, to quote the words of one of the most distinguished philosophers of the age, on this subject. "We need an institution for the formation of better teachers ; and until this step is taken, we can make no important progress. The most crying want in this Commonwealth is the want of accomplished teachers. We boast of our schools ; but our schools do comparatively little for want of educated instructors. Without good teaching a school is but a name. An institution for training men to train the young, would be a fountain of living waters, sending forth streams to refresh present and future ages." \*

Great interest has been evinced in the establishment of a Normal school in Plymouth county. As premises furnishing adequate accommodation were not to be obtained in a convenient situation, it was deemed advisable by those desirous of effecting the object to raise a fund of ten thousand dollars for that purpose. The contributions toward this fund have been completed ; but difficulties have arisen as to the location of the school. This point has been referred to disinterested persons not resident in the county. The efforts made to secure the establishment of this institution have been of the most praiseworthy character, and a zeal never before witnessed in the cause of education, has been awakened in most of the towns in Plymouth county.

The last Annual Report contains a statement of the steps taken by the Board, to give effect to the act of the 12th of April, 1837, by which the school districts of the Commonwealth were authorized to form school libraries,

\* Rev. Dr. Channing.

by a small annual appropriation for the purchase of books. In the course of the year, ten volumes have been published by Messrs. Marsh, Capen, Lyon and Webb, under the sanction of the Board, being the first ten of a series, to be issued under the name of the "School Library." Other volumes will follow as rapidly as they can pass through the press. In giving their joint sanction to the volumes thus published, nothing was further from the intentions of the Board, than to attempt any control over the free choice of the committees employed to purchase books for the district libraries. But it is well known to all who have turned their thoughts to the subject, that an ample supply of instructive books, in the various departments of useful knowledge, does not exist throughout the community. The establishment of social libraries, in the various towns of the Commonwealth, has ever been deemed very desirable ; and since increased attention has been turned to the subject of education of late years, it has been universally admitted that the collection of a district School Library, in each district, is an object scarcely inferior in importance to the support of the school. In fact it is essentially a part of the School System ; for to what avail are our children taught to read, if good books are not accessible to them ? It was doubtless in this view of the subject, that the Legislature of the Commonwealth, following the example which had been recently set in New York, (a state whose enlightened and liberal care of the interests of education is entitled to the highest praise), was induced, in the law already alluded to, to authorize a small annual appropriation for the purchase of School Libraries, *by those districts disposed to make it.* It was no part of the design of the Legislature to limit

the discretion of the School Committees in making the selection ; nor have the Board of Education, in sanctioning the publication of a series of works well adapted for School Libraries, designed or attempted any interference with the free choice of the Committees. They have as little wish as right to exercise such dictation. They have supposed, however, that it would be an acceptable service to Committees, hesitating in the multitude of publications daily sent forth from the press,—often forced on their notice by itinerant venders,—to have a selection of volumes recommended to them by a body of individuals, who cannot be suspected of any selfish interest, and whose unanimous approval of each volume excludes the possibility of the intrusion of sectarian or party prejudices. If the members of the Board may be permitted to judge of the wants and wishes of their fellow citizens, by what they have experienced individually as parents and school-committee men, such a recommendation, claiming no other character than that of a suggestion to be adopted or rejected by those concerned, cannot prove other than acceptable. It will still remain, equally as before, within the option of School Committees, to purchase such books as they may think best adapted to the wants of their districts. They may purchase those recommended by the Board ; or give the preference to other selections prepared in other places ; or they may make a free choice themselves, out of the almost innumerable volumes daily appearing.

The Board believe, also, that the inspection of the volumes already published, and of the titles of those proposed, (a list of which is subjoined), will effectually remove all apprehension which may have been felt, that the sanction by the Board of books suitable for a school

library, might have a sinister effect, either positive or negative, in reference to religious instruction. While the organization of the Board is itself, (it is hoped), a sufficient guaranty, that no such influence could be designed, the examination of the books already published, and of the list of those in preparation, will sufficiently show, that no such effect has ever, by inadvertence, taken place. The subject of religious instruction has been placed by the Legislature of the Commonwealth, where public sentiment and the necessity of the case would place it and keep it, even without legislation. In a community, where the utmost liberty of religious profession exists,—where it is the dearest birth-right of every man, that he may worship God according to the dictates of his conscience, any attempt to make the public schools, (supported as they are by the common expense for the common benefit), an instrument for advancing or depressing the opinions of any sect of christians, would meet what it would merit, the prompt rebuke of every considerate citizen. Although it may not be easy theoretically, to draw the line between those views of religious truth and of christian faith, which are common to all, and may, therefore, with propriety be inculcated in school, and those which, being peculiar to individual sects, are therefore by law excluded ; still it is believed, that no practical difficulty occurs in the conduct of our schools in this respect. It is the general sentiment of the people of all denominations, that religious instruction shall be left to parents at the fire-side and to the religious teachers, to whose ministrations parents and guardians may choose to confide their own spiritual guidance and that of those dependent on them. The Legislature therefore has but acted in ac-



cordance with the sense of the community, in prescribing that no books shall be directed by school committees, to be purchased or used in any of the town schools, “ which are calculated to favor the tenets of any particular set of christians.”

Although the School Library, whose publication has been sanctioned by the Board, does not consist of school books or books to be used in schools, it has still been considered, that the spirit of the law applies equally to the books to be purchased for school libraries, and this principle has governed the Board in giving their recommendation. They have not supposed, that books for religious instruction (strictly so called) were in the contemplation of the Legislature, in authorizing the formation of school libraries, but works of useful knowledge and general science ; not excluding, however, those, in which scientific research is made subservient to the establishment and illustration of moral and religious truth. But, if in this they have mistaken the design of the Legislature,—if theological works were within the purview of the law authorizing the formation of district libraries, and if the restriction on school books just alluded to, is inapplicable to the library books, it will be in the power of school committees, that desire it, to obtain books of that description for the school libraries. The Board of Education attempts no interference with this course, however strong their opinion of its inexpediency and illegality.

With these explanations, the attention of the Legislature, of the friends of education, and the public generally, is invited to the volumes already published, which may serve as a fair specimen of the whole. It will be seen that they are recommended, in the first place, by

great neatness of execution, and by being afforded at a price, which considering the style of the typography, must be considered very reasonable. The Board attach some importance to these circumstances, believing that the formation of a taste for reading, in the community, depends, to a considerable degree, on a supply of books at a moderate price, which are correctly printed, and can be read with ease. Could the distaste for books sometimes manifested by young persons, whose character is not formed, be traced to its source, it might no doubt in many cases be found in the repulsive exterior, obscure type, unsightly paper, and incorrect printing of the few books within their reach. The books recommended by the Board, without any pretensions to typographical luxury, are free from all these objections.

With respect to the more important point of the subjects of the books, it is believed, they are without exception, such as a christian parent would approve. It has not been possible to proceed on a systematic plan, in giving, in the first ten volumes, a proportionate share to every branch of knowledge. Still there will be found to be a due degree of variety in their contents. The Natural Theology of Paley, with the illustrations and supplements of Sir Charles Bell and Lord Brougham, and the notes of Dr. Elisha Bartlett, by whom the present edition is prepared, is contained in two of the volumes. Nothing need be said in commendation of this great work, in which the fundamental truths of natural religion are placed on a basis which can never be shaken, and set forth with a beauty and variety of illustration never surpassed. An Abridgment of Mr. Irving's Life of Columbus, has been prepared for this Series, by its distinguished author, and is contained in another of

the volumes already published. Three volumes selected from Sparks' Library of American Biography, contain the lives of many of the most distinguished statesmen and heroes of our country. Four volumes of the Sacred Philosophy of the Seasons, by Dr. Henry Duncan, of Scotland, have been prepared for the School Library, by the Rev. Dr. Greenwood ; and will be found to contain the most interesting and instructive views of almost all the phenomena of the natural world.

For a fuller exposition of the views of the Board, as to the importance of this attempt to promote the formation of School Libraries, and of the principles on which their sanction has been given to the works published, reference is respectfully made to the Introductory Essay, prepared by a member of the Board, and prefixed to the first volume. They will only here ask leave to remark, that while they confidently believe that the volumes which have been and may be published under their sanction, will be found of a pure and salutary moral tendency, well adapted to feed and strengthen the appetite for useful knowledge, and entirely free from every thing which could corrupt or mislead the youthful mind ; they do not desire, as individuals, to be considered responsible for every opinion or shade of opinion, that may be expressed in the volumes. It would not be possible for any person or any number of persons, in any capacity, to select a library of books for family or school use, of which every volume in every sentence should faithfully reflect the precise opinions of the individual or individuals making the selection.

The Board beg leave, in this connection, to submit to the Legislature the expediency, in order to the further encouragement of the formation of School Libraries, of al-

lowing to the several School Districts, out of the income of the School fund, a sum equal to that, which may be appropriated by the District, not exceeding \$10 per annum to any District, the whole to be expended at the discretion of the School Committee. A similar measure has been adopted, it is understood in New York, and with the best effect.

It is a part of the duty of the Board prescribed by law, to prepare and lay before the Legislature, in a printed form, on or before the second Wednesday in January, annually, an abstract of the School Returns received by the Secretary of the Commonwealth. This duty has, according to law, been laboriously and faithfully performed, in the Office of the Secretary of State, under the superintendence of the Secretary of the Board.\*

The attention of the Legislature is particularly invited to this abstract. In addition to the usual statistical facts, which are required by law to be embraced in the returns, extracts from the reports of the school committees will be found in many cases appended to the digest of the returns of the several towns. These extracts have been taken, with great labor, by the Secretary of the Board, from the copies of the reports of the school committees, required by law to be transmitted, with the returns, to the office of the secretary of state. It is believed that these extracts will give a considerably increased interest and value to the annual abstract of the returns. They present the views of the school committees of the Commonwealth on the subject of education in their several towns, the condition of

\* The greater part of the work mentioned in the Report of the Secretary of State of the 1st Jan 1840, as being done in his office for the Board of Education, was performed in the preparation of the statistical tables of the Abstract of the School Returns, under the law of 13th April, 1838.



their schools, and the measures deemed advisable or practicable by the committees for their improvement. These reports of the school committees are entitled to the highest respect, inasmuch as they are the utterance of the voice of the people, on the all-important subject of the education of their children,—expressed through the organs of their own immediate choice. It will appear conclusively from the extracts given from these reports, that the recent legislation of the Commonwealth, having for its object the improvement of the common schools; the measures adopted by the Board under the sanction or by the direction of the general court, to carry that legislation into effect; and the general suggestions, which have proceeded from the Board on the subject of the schools, and the improvements desirable or practicable in their condition, are fully sustained by the school committees of the Commonwealth, as far as can be judged from the reports, of which copies have been transmitted to the office of the secretary of state. Believing the citizens, who faithfully perform the duties of school committee men, to be benefactors of the public, in the highest sense of the word, the board cannot but express their own feeling of obligation to that portion of them, whose reports they have had the opportunity of consulting. The views and opinions contained in them are submitted to the Legislature, with full confidence that they will receive respectful consideration; and be found to give a value to the annual abstract, which it has not possessed in any former year.

During the past year, a semi-monthly journal, expressly devoted to the subject of education, entitled “The Common School Journal,” has been published under the editorship of the Secretary of the Board.

Twenty-four numbers of this journal have appeared. The Board have no official connection with this publication, but they beg leave to express the opinion, that it will be found a valuable repository of documents on the subject of education, and an important auxiliary to the efforts made for its improvement.

For the discussion of other topics connected with this subject, and particularly that of the existing supply of books in the community, the Board would refer to the report of their Secretary, which is herewith submitted. In conclusion, they would invoke the continued attention of the Legislature to the great interests of that Common School education, which, as far as human means go, is the foundation of our prosperity as a people. It is not intended to utter any sentiment unfriendly to our higher seminaries of education. They too are the creation of the people, early called into being to supply the demands of the public service in the various relations of life; and they have been steadily countenanced and liberally endowed in all periods of our history. By the Constitution of the State, it is made the duty of "legislatures and magistrates in all future periods of the Commonwealth, to cherish the interests of literature and the sciences, and all seminaries of them; especially the University of Cambridge" (the only collegiate institution then in existence), public schools and grammar schools in the towns." But, without instituting any invidious comparison between the different classes of institutions for education; and firmly believing that the colleges and schools are the best friends of each other, and prosper most where they prosper together; the Board would still respectfully submit the opinion, that the improvement of the Common Schools is emphatically, and, in

the first instance, the concern of the people. They are intended for the children of the whole community, while comparatively, a small number receive a college education. The elementary school must be placed at the door of the individual citizen, or at least in the centre of the village, or many of those for whom it is intended, will fail to enjoy its benefits. While it is also desirable, that the means of a collegiate education should be as widely diffused as is possible, without lowering its standard, it must of necessity, in almost all cases, be sought at some distance from home, and if not found in one place, it may be obtained at another. For this reason, the state of the higher seminaries of learning does not of necessity determine the character of a community, even in reference to those branches of education for which they are provided. Not so with the Common Schools. Their condition is an infallible index of that of the community. Never was there a prosperous, virtuous, intelligent people, where the schools were in a languishing condition. They furnish the keys of knowledge to the mass of the people. They are the only avenue, by which the majority of the rising generation are able, as they grow up, to make their way into life, prepared to discharge its duties and fulfil its relations, with ease and credit to themselves, and with advantage to society.

The Board rejoice in the conviction, that this is a cause, which makes no appeal to sectarian or party feeling. It has hitherto proved a neutral ground, amidst all the collisions of judgment on other subjects. It appears to have been instinctively felt, by all good citizens, that the common school system required their united support, and that if once drawn into the vortex of party it

must sink. It has been the earnest endeavor of the Board to act in all respects in accordance with this principle ; and they have the satisfaction to state, that, as far as their agency and means of observation extend, it exists and operates on the minds of the people with unimpaired vigor.

It has also been to them a source of satisfaction to observe the interest manifested in several of our sister states and in foreign countries, in the efforts which have been made of late years, in this Commonwealth, to raise the standard of popular education. While Massachusetts has followed the example of New York and Connecticut, in the establishment of a school fund ; her own educational legislation and measures, particularly those relating to Normal Schools, are watched with anxiety in many of the other states. It has always been the boast of our ancient Commonwealth, that the education of the young has been an object of peculiar care ; and if she would sustain her enviable reputation in this respect, she must permit no relaxation of the zeal which has hitherto animated her. The cause of education is eminently the cause of the age ; and the impression is gaining strength both in Europe and in this country, that it is only by raising the standard of education, that the social, political, and moral condition of the people can be improved.

But all measures designed to promote education, must depend for their success, in this country, on the hearty coöperation of public opinion. It is only by enlightening and concentrating that opinion, that powerful effects can be produced. This is most effectually to be done, by persevering appeals to the understanding of the people, by placing the subject in every proper form of argument and persuasion before the public mind, and by

giving publicity to the facts, which, prove the defects in the system, as existing in some portions of the Commonwealth, and the great excellence to which it is brought in other portions ; thus encouraging a generous emulation, where nothing but good can result from the effort to excel. In the growing attention already bestowed on the subject, the Board behold the assurance of much good actually accomplished, and an encouragement, under the direction of the Legislature, to an increased zeal in the discharge of their duties.

EDWARD EVERETT,  
GEORGE HULL,  
EDMUND DWIGHT,  
GEORGE PUTNAM,  
ROBERT RANTOUL, JR.  
THOMAS ROBBINS,  
JARED SPARKS,  
CHARLES HUDSON,  
W. G. BATES.

*Boston, 27th December, 1839.*



The annexed advertisement of the Publishers of the School Library is subjoined in an abridged form. It contains the list of the books published and of those in preparation.

## THE SCHOOL LIBRARY.

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MARSH, CAPEN, LYON AND WEBB,

109, WASHINGTON STREET, BOSTON,

ARE NOW PUBLISHING, UNDER THE SANCTION OF THE MASSACHUSETTS BOARD OF EDUCATION, A COLLECTION OF ORIGINAL AND SELECTED WORKS, ENTITLED 'THE SCHOOL LIBRARY.'

The LIBRARY will embrace two series of fifty volumes each ; the one to be in 18mo., averaging from 250 to 280 pages per volume ; the other in 12mo., each volume containing from 350 to 400 pages. The former, or *Juvenile Series*, is intended for children of ten or twelve years of age and *under* ; the latter for individuals of that age, and *upwards*,—in other words, for advanced scholars and their parents.

The LIBRARY is to consist of *reading*, and not *school*, *class*, or *text* books ; the design being to furnish youth with suitable works for perusal during their leisure hours ; works that will interest, as well as instruct them, and of such a character that they will turn to them with pleasure, when it is desirable to unbend from the studies of the school room.

The plan will embrace every department of Science and Literature, preference being given to works relating to our own country, and illustrative of the history, institutions, manners, customs, &c. of our own people. Being intended for the *whole* community, no work of a sectarian or denominational character in religion, or of a partisan character in politics, will be admitted.

The aim will be to clothe the subjects discussed, in a popular garb,

that they may prove so attractive, as to lure the child onwards, fix his attention, and induce him, subsequently, to seek information from other and more recondite works, which, if put into his hands at the onset, would alarm him, and induce a disgust for that which would appear dry and unintelligible, and of course uninteresting.

The intention is not to provide information for any one class, to the exclusion of others, but to disseminate knowledge among all classes. The Publishers wish the children of the Farmer, the Merchant, the Manufacturer, the Mechanic, the Laborer,—all to profit by the lights of science and literature, that they may be rendered the more virtuous and happy, and become more useful to themselves, to one another, to the community, and mankind at large. To accomplish this desirable end, the LIBRARY will embrace so wide a range of subjects, that every child may find something which will prove useful and profitable to him, whatever his situation, circumstances, or pursuits, in after life may be.

The project is one of great extent, and vast importance; and, if properly carried out, must become of inestimable value to the young. Whether the anticipations of the Publishers, with regard to it, will be verified, time must determine; but, from the intellectual and moral, theoretical and practical character of those who have engaged to aid in the undertaking, they have good grounds for presuming that much will be accomplished, and that by their united efforts many obstacles, now existing to the mental, moral, and physical improvement of youth, will be removed, or at least be rendered more easily surmountable.

Among the individuals already engaged as writers for one or both Series, may be mentioned—the Hon. Judge Story, Jared Sparks, Esq., Washington Irving, Esq., Rev. Dr. Wayland, Professor Benjamin Siliman, Professor Denison Olmsted, Professor Alonzo Potter, D. D., Hon. Judge Buel, Jacob Bigelow, M. D., Elisha Bartlett, M. D., Rev. Charles W. Upham, Rev. F. W. P. Greenwood, D. D., Rev. Royal Robbins, Rev. Warren Burton, Charles T. Jackson, M. D., N. Hawthorne, Esq., Robert Rantoul, Jr., Esq., Professor Tucker, Professor Elton, Professor Francis Lieber, Rev. Calvin E. Stowe, D. D., Professor Joseph Alden, D. D., Professor B. B. Edwards, Hon. Alexander H. Everett, Hon. Isaac Hill, Hon. James M. Porter.

Mrs. Emma C. Embury, Mrs. Sarah J. Hale, Mrs. E. F. Ellet,—Mrs. A. H. Lincoln Phelps, Mrs. H. E. B. Stowe, Miss E. Robbins, Miss E. P. Peabody, Miss Mary E. Lee, Miss C. M. Sedgwick.

No work will be admitted into the LIBRARY, unless it be approved by every member of the Board of Education ; which Board consists of the following individuals, viz., His Excellency Edward Everett, Chairman, His Honor George Hull, Edmund Dwight, Esq., Rev. George Putnam, Robert Rantoul, Jr. Esq., Rev. Thomas Robbins, D. D., Jared Sparks, Esq., Hon. Charles Hudson, Hon. George N. Briggs, and W. G. Bates, Esq.

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7. Analogy between Animal and Vegetable Nutrition.
  8. Further Improvement of the Soil,
  9.     "             "             by Manures, Animal and Vegetable.
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  18. Effects of Cropping and Manuring.
  19. Rules and Suggestions in Farming.
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  21. On the Cultivation of Grasses.
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It is not the intention of the Publishers to drive these works through the Press with an undue speed, in the hope of securing the market, by



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THIRD ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

SECRETARY OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION.

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## TO THE BOARD OF EDUCATION.

GENTLEMEN :—

After discharging, for another year, the duties of the office you have conferred upon me, I respectfully submit my Third Annual Report. During the last year, I have visited all the counties in the State, and met, in convention, at central and convenient places, such friends of Education, as chose to assemble ;—I have maintained an active correspondence with all parts of the Commonwealth, on subjects pertaining to the means and processes of popular instruction, and I have superintended the preparation and printing of the Annual Abstract of the School Returns for the school year 1838–9. The Abstract is a document of unusual value and interest, from the fact of its containing selections from the reports of school committees, made by them; last spring, to their respective towns ;—copies of which reports were forwarded to the office of the Secretary of State, in conformity with the existing provisions of law. As, in the special Report, made to the Board and prefixed to the Abstract, I have given a brief statement of its contents, and of the principles observed in preparing it, I will here only add, that I regard it as one of the most useful documents on the subject ever presented to the people of the State. Our system of Common Schools will have advanced very far towards perfection, when all the wise and excellent suggestions contained in that document shall have been reduced to practice.

Having collected, arranged and condensed a considerable number of facts on a few important topics, I proceed to lay the results before the Board ; and I take the liberty to accompany them with such views and conclusions, as a careful consideration of them has suggested to me.

I feel fully justified in affirming, that the prospects of the rising generation are daily growing brighter, by means of the increasing light which is shed upon them from our Common Schools. I refer

here, more particularly, to such proofs, as are hardly susceptible of being condensed into statistical tables, or even of being presented as isolated facts ;—these speak for themselves. But I refer to such indications of returning health, as prove to the watchful attendant that the crisis of the malady has passed. Stronger feelings and firmer convictions of the importance of our Common Schools are taking possession of the public mind, and where they have not yet manifested themselves in any outward and visible improvement, they are silently and gradually working to that end.

In determining the rate of annual advancement, however, which the friends of this cause are authorized reasonably to expect, it should not be forgotten, that all improvements in the system, depend ultimately upon the people themselves, and upon the school officers, whom, in their several towns and districts, they see fit to elect. All improvements in the schools, therefore, suppose and require a simultaneous and corresponding improvement in public sentiment, and in the liberality of the citizens, who, by a major vote, from year to year, measure out the pecuniary means for their support, and elect the officers who are to superintend the application of those means. Progress which must be so thorough, must necessarily be slow. But the thoroughness is a compensation for the slowness, for when a revolution is once wrought, it will be enduring. The Legislature, having conferred upon the Board of Education no authority, as to the amount of money to be raised, the teachers to be employed, the books, apparatus or other instruments of instruction to be used, the condition of the houses in which the schools are taught ; nor, indeed, as to any other subject, which can, in the slightest degree, abridge the power or touch the property of towns or districts, the responsibility, in all these respects, continues to rest, where it always has rested, and where, it is to be hoped, it always will rest, with the towns and districts themselves. On these points, encouragement may be highly beneficial ; compulsion would counterwork its own purposes.

Hence, it is obvious, that if the Board or the Legislature should devise and promulgate the wisest system imaginable, and define the exact processes by which it could be executed and all its fruits realized, the administration of that system must still be left with the local authorities. In the last stage of the process, and at the very

point, where the means are applied to the objects, they must pass through the hands of the town and district officers, and of the teachers, whom they employ. In our system of Public Instruction, therefore, it is emphatically true, that the influences flowing from the Legislature or from any advisory body, may have their quality entirely changed, by being assimilated to the character and views of the men, through whose hands they eventually pass ;—just as the nutritious juices, which ascend from the roots of a tree, may lose their original properties and be made to produce fruits of various flavor, according to the nature of the engrafted scions, through whose transforming pores they flow. Wherever, therefore, we find improvements in the schools, it is a gratifying proof, that higher views are prevailing in the community in which those improvements originate.

I advert to these facts respecting the authority, or rather the want of authority, in the Board, and their entire dependence upon the efficient coöperation of the public, because I occasionally meet with misapprehensions respecting their office, and powers and consequent duties ;—some persons, looking to the Board for action, in matters of which they have not the slightest official cognizance, and others, deploring their possession of powers, of which there is no trace nor indication to be found, either in the law which created them, or in any of their official or unofficial proceedings.

It will not be expected, that I should communicate, in detail, the proofs, that might be adduced, of an increased and increasing public interest in our Common Schools ; but it may be gratifying to the Board to be made acquainted with a few of them. In Greenfield, the shire town of Franklin county, containing a population of nearly two thousand, the sum raised by taxes for the support of schools, in each of the years 1836 and 1837, was \$800, only ; and the schoolhouse, in their central district, was mainly valuable as showing how school-houses should not be built. During the last year the sum raised by taxes, in the town, was increased to \$1,700, and the central district, (which has been incorporated, as a separate School District,) has provided itself with a large and beautiful house, at an expense of \$3,300, and has established an annual school therein. It remains to be seen what influence the incorporation of the central district will exert upon the exterior districts in the town. The originators of

the measure anticipate the most favorable results, and they seem to be almost pledged to their fellow-townsmen for their realization. Roxbury was one of the towns, required by law to keep a town school ; but since the year 1826, when the present provision of the law in regard to town schools, was enacted, it has belonged to that large class of towns which have non-complied with the requisition. The largest sum, as it appears by the Abstracts, heretofore raised by that town, is \$5,000. This year, the town has raised the sum of \$14,500, and has established the town school required by law, and voted to its teacher one of the most liberal salaries given in the State. The town of Gloucester has also put in operation a town school. In Phillipston, in Worcester county, five new and commodious schoolhouses have been erected ; and the town of Chatham in Barnstable county, raised last March, \$4,000, for the improvement of their schoolhouses only. Until the present year, the principal district in the town of Edgartown, in Duke's county, had maintained its school upon so extraordinary a plan, that, in two or three important particulars, there was little possibility of its becoming worse. This district had made no provision for its children under seven years of age. Between the ages of seven and sixteen, there were about two hundred children belonging to it. For the accommodation of all these children, it had but one schoolhouse, which was old, small, and with but one room, and that room, incapable of receiving more than about forty pupils, i. e. one-fifth of the whole number of children, between the ages of seven and sixteen. This number, was divided into five classes, which took their turns in attending the school,—one class attending one-fifth part of the year, or about ten weeks, and then being dismissed for the remaining forty-two weeks of the year ; then another class attending the same length of time, to be dismissed in its turn, and so on through the five classes. Surely, it would be unreasonable to anticipate much improvement in the children, under this reversal of the proper length between term-time and vacation. While, in many other places in the State, not more favorably situated than this, children were in school forty or forty-two weeks of the year, and out of it but ten or twelve, these were in it but ten and out of it forty-two. But as soon as the attention of that people was turned to the demands of this



great interest, and to a comparison of their own, with the condition of other places,—with a promptitude and liberality, highly creditable to them, they made immediate provision for the instruction of their children between the ages of four and seven years, and they have just completed a commodious house, having two rooms, and of more than four times the capacity of the former. Other places might be referred to, such as Salisbury in Essex county, Hanson in Plymouth county, &c. &c., which, in erecting schoolhouses, have not been satisfied with estimating the aggregate number of cubic feet in forty or fifty children, and graduating the capacity of the school room by the result; but, in the construction of their houses, have provided for the comfort and health of the pupils, and for the best moral and social influences upon their character. The city of Boston is erecting twelve large and elegant schoolrooms, this season. One house alone will cost, by estimate, twenty thousand dollars, and is intended to be constructed throughout, on the most improved plan. Taking all the constituents of a good schoolhouse into the account, decidedly the best, I have yet seen in the State, is one, erected during the last year, in the upper district of the town of Chelsea.

It must not, however, be inferred, that the most extensive reform is not still necessary in regard to those edifices, where the business of education, for the great mass of the children in the State, is carried on. By what I have learned from authentic sources, and have seen, in three annual circuits through all parts of the Commonwealth, respecting its three thousand schoolhouses, I am convinced that there is no other class of buildings within our limits, erected either for the permanent or the temporary residence of our native population, so inconvenient, so uncomfortable, so dangerous to health by their construction within, or so unsightly and repulsive in their appearance without. Every other class of edifices, whether public or private, has felt the hand of reform. Churches, courthouses, even jails and prisons, are rebuilt, or remodelled, great regard being paid, in most cases to ornament, and in all cases to health, to personal convenience and accommodation. But the schoolhouse, which leads directly towards the church, or rather may be considered as its vestibule, and which furnishes to the vast majority of our children, the only public means they will ever enjoy, for qualifying themselves to profit by its counsels, its promises, its warnings, its consolations;—



the schoolhouse, which leads directly from the courthouse, from the jail and from the prison, and is, for the mass of our children, the great preventive and safeguard against being called or forced into them, as litigants or as criminals ;—this class of buildings, all over the State, stands in afflicting contrast with all the others. The courthouses, which are planned and erected under the advice and control of the county authorities, and of the leading men in the county for themselves and in which they spend but a few terms in the year, and the meeting-houses, where the parents spend but a few hours in a week, are provided with costly embellishments, and with every appurtenance, that can gratify taste or subserve comfort ; but the houses, where the children, in the most susceptible period of their lives, spend from thirty to forty hours in a week, seem to be deserted by all public care, and abandoned to cheerlessness and dilapidation. I do not think there are more than a hundred of the three thousand schoolhouses in the State, erected in a style at all superior, even if equal, to that of the very poorest public buildings of any other kind, in the very poorest and most sparsely populated portions of the Commonwealth. Leaving the city of Boston out of the account, it would be easy to select a hundred churches, which the parents have built for themselves, worth all the three thousand schoolhouses, collectively, which they have built for the children. At the rate of one hundred a year, it will take more than a quarter of a century to renovate them all. Of many of them, however, it may be predicted with certainty, that, however long they may be able to endure the weight of public opinion, their own weight, they cannot long sustain.

To those, whose views of public and private duty can never be satisfied by any thing short of a universal education for the people, it will be gratifying to be informed, that a new interest has been excited during the last year, in behalf of the children of persons employed upon our public works. This class of children, heretofore, has not shared in the provisions for education, made by our laws, and has rarely been embraced in any of the numerous plans for moral improvement, devised and sustained by private charity ; and hence they have been growing up in the midst of our institutions, uninstructed even in those rudiments of knowledge, without which self-education is hardly practicable. During the last year, a few inhabitants of the town of Middlefield, (which is situated in the western part of Hampshire

county,) commiserating the destitute condition of the children along the line of the rail-road, in their vicinity, took active measures to supply them with the means of instruction. A gentleman of that town, Mr. Alexander Ingham, was the first to engage in, and has been most active in carrying on, this Samaritan enterprise. The good example extended, and a considerable number of children, along the line of work, were soon gathered, either into the public schools, or, where that was impracticable, into schools established expressly for them, at private expense. At the Common School Convention in the county of Hampden, held in the month of August last, the condition of these children, and the necessity of some further measures in their behalf, constituted one of the topics of inquiry and discussion. A committee was appointed, of which Mr. Ingham was chairman, to collect the facts of the case. From this committee I have learned, that there were, in the month of September last, more than three hundred children, between the ages of four and sixteen, belonging to the laborers on the rail-road west of Connecticut river, who were not considered as entitled to the privileges of the public schools, or were in such a local situation as not to be able to attend them. A pregnant fact also, in relation to the subject is, that, in the enumeration of all the children of all ages, belonging to that class of people, "a large proportion of them are under the age of four years." Owing to efforts since made by private individuals, a very large majority of all these children, who are of a suitable age, are now enjoying the benefits of Common School education.

Another subject, respecting which I have sought for information from all authentic sources, and to which I have given especial attention in my circuit through the State, is the observance or non-observance of the law "for the better instruction of youth, employed in manufacturing establishments." This law was enacted in April, 1836, and was to take effect on the first day of April, 1837. The substance of its provisions, is, that, no owner, agent, or superintendent of any manufacturing establishment, shall employ any child, under the age of fifteen years, to labor in such establishment, unless such child shall have attended some public or private day school, where instruction is given by a legally qualified teacher, at least three months of the twelve months, next preceding any and every year, in which

such child shall be so employed. The penalty for each violation is fifty dollars. The law has now been in operation sufficiently long, to make manifest the intentions of those to whom its provisions apply, and whether those humane provisions are likely to be observed or defeated. From the information obtained, I feel fully authorized to say, that, in the great majority of cases, the law is obeyed. But it is my painful duty also to say, that, in some places, it has been uniformly and systematically disregarded. The law is best observed in the largest manufacturing places. In several of the most extensive manufacturing villages and districts, all practicable measures are taken to prevent a single instance of violation. Some establishments have conducted most generously towards the schools; and, in one case, (at Waltham), a corporation, besides paying its proportion of taxes for the support of the public schools in the town, has gratuitously erected three schoolhouses,—the last in 1837, a neat, handsome, modern, stone building, two stories in height,—and maintained schools therein, at a charge, in the whole, upon the corporate funds, of a *principal* sum of more than seven thousand dollars. It would be improper for me here, to be more particular than to say, that these generous acts have been done by the “*Boston Manufacturing Company*”; though all will regret, that the identity of the individual members, who have performed these praiseworthy deeds, should be lost in the generality of the corporate name.

Comparatively speaking, there seems to have been far greater disregard of the law, by private individuals and by small corporations, especially where the premises are rented from year to year, or from term to term, than by the owners or agents of large establishments. Private individuals, renting an establishment for one, or for a few years,—intending to realize from it what profits they can, and then to abandon it and remove from the neighborhood or town where it is situated,—may be supposed to feel less permanent interest in the condition of the people, who are growing up around them, and they are less under the control of public opinion in the vicinity. But, without seeking an explanation of the cause, there cannot be a doubt as to the fact.

It is obvious, that the consent of two parties is necessary to the infraction of this law, and to the infliction of this highest species of injustice upon the children whom it was designed to protect. Not

only must the employer pursue a course of action, by which the godlike powers and capacities of the human soul are wrought into thoroughmade products of ignorance, and misery, and vice, with as much certainty and celerity, as his raw materials of wool or cotton are wrought into fabrics for the market by his own machinery ; but the parent also must be willing to convert the holy relation of parent and child, into the unholy one of master and slave, and to sell his child into ransomless bondage, for the pittance of money he can earn. Yet, strange to say, there are many parents, not only of our immigrant, but of our native population, so lost to the sacred nature of the relation they sustain towards the children whom they have brought into all the solemn realities of existence, that they go from town to town, seeking opportunities, to consign them to unbroken, bodily toil, although it involves the deprivation of all the means of intellectual and moral growth ;—thus pandering to their own vicious appetites, by adopting the most efficient measures, to make their offspring as vicious as themselves.

If, in a portion of the manufacturing districts, in the State, a regular and systematic obedience is paid to the law, while, in other places, it is regularly and systematically disregarded, the inevitable consequences to the latter will be obvious, upon a moment's reflection. The neighborhood or town where the law is broken will soon become the receptacle of the poorest, most vicious and abandoned parents, who are bringing up their children to be also as poor, vicious and abandoned as themselves. The whole class of parents, who cannot obtain employment for their children, at one place, but are welcomed at another, will circulate through the body politic, until at last, they will settle down as permanent residents, in the latter ; like the vicious humors of the natural body, which, being thrown off by every healthy part, at last accumulate and settle upon a diseased spot. Every breach of this law, therefore, inflicts direct and positive injustice, not only upon the children employed, but upon all the industrious and honest communities in which they are employed ; because its effect will be to fill those communities with paupers and criminals ;—or, at least, with a class of persons, who, without being absolute, technical paupers, draw their subsistence in a thousand indirect ways, from the neighborhood, where they reside ; and without being absolute criminals in the eye of the law, still commit a thousand inju-



rious, predatory acts, more harassing and annoying to the peace and security of a village, than many classes of positive crimes.

While water-power only is used for manufacturing purposes, a natural limit is affixed, in every place, to the extension of manufactories. The power being all taken up, in any place, the further investment of capital and the employment of an increased number of operatives, must cease. While we restrict ourselves to the propulsion of machinery by water, therefore, it is impossible, that we should have such an extensive manufacturing district as, for instance, that of Manchester in England, because we have no streams of sufficient magnitude for the purpose. But Massachusetts is already the greatest manufacturing State in the Union. Her best sites are all taken up, and yet her disposition to manufacture appears not to be checked. Under such circumstances, it seems not improbable, that steam-power will be resorted to. Indeed this is already done to some extent. Should such improvements be made in the use of steam, or such new markets be opened for the sale of manufactured products, that capitalists, by selecting sites where the expense of transportation, both of the raw material and of the finished article, may be so reduced as, on the whole, to make it profitable to manufacture by steam, then that agency will be forthwith employed ; and, if steam is employed, there is no assignable limit to the amount of a manufacturing population, that may be gathered into a single manufacturing district. If, therefore, we would not have, in any subsequent time, a population like that of the immense city of Manchester, where great numbers of the laboring population live in the filthiest streets, and mostly in houses, which are framed back to back, so that in no case is there any yard behind them, but all ingress and egress, for all purposes, is between the front side of the house and the public street,—if we would not have such a population, we must not only have preventive laws, but we must see that no cupidity, no contempt of the public welfare for the sake of private gain, is allowed openly to violate or clandestinely to evade them. It would, indeed, be most lamentable and self-contradictory, if, with all our institutions devised and prepared on the hypothesis of common intelligence and virtue, we should rear a class of children, to be set apart and, as it were, dedicated to ignorance and vice.



After presenting to the Board one further consideration, I will leave this subject. It is obvious, that children of ten, twelve, or fourteen years of age, may be steadily worked in our manufactories, without any schooling, and that this cruel deprivation may be persevered in for six, eight, or ten years, and yet, during all this period, no very alarming outbreak shall occur to rouse the public mind from its guilty slumber. The children are in their years of minority, and they have no control over their own time, or their own actions. The bell is to them, what the water-wheel and the main shaft are to the machinery, which they superintend. The wheel revolves and the machinery must go ; the bell rings and the children must assemble. In their hours of work, they are under the police of the establishment ; at other times, they are under the police of the neighborhood. Hence this state of things may continue for years, and the peace of the neighborhood remain undisturbed, except, perhaps, by a few nocturnal or sabbath-day depredations. The ordinary movements of society may go on without any shocks or collisions,—as, in the human system, a disease may work at the vitals and gain a fatal ascendancy there, before it manifests itself on the surface. But the punishment for such an offence, will not be remitted, because its infliction is postponed. The retribution, indeed, is not postponed, it only awaits the full completion of the offence ; for this is a crime of such magnitude, that it requires years for the criminal to perpetrate it in, and to finish it off thoroughly, in all its parts. But when the children pass from the condition of restraint to that of freedom,—from years of enforced but impatient servitude to that independence for which they have secretly pined, and to which they have looked forward, not merely as the period of emancipation, but of long-delayed indulgence ;—when they become strong in the passions and propensities that grow up spontaneously, but are weak in the moral powers that control them, and blind in the intellect which foresees their tendencies ;—when, according to the course of our political institutions, they go, by one bound, from the political nothingness of a child, to the political sovereignty of a man,—then, for that people, who so cruelly neglected and injured them, there will assuredly come a day of retribution. It scarcely needs to be added, on the other hand, that if the wants of the spiritual nature of a child, in the successive stages of its growth, are duly supplied ; then a regularity in manual employment,

is converted from a servitude into a useful habit of diligence, and the child grows up in a daily perception of the wonder-working power of industry, and in the daily realization of the trophies of victorious labor. A majority of the most useful men who have ever lived, were formed under the happy necessity of mingling bodily with mental exertion.

But by far the most important subject, respecting which I have sought for information, during the year, remains to be noticed. While we are in little danger of over-estimating the value of Common Schools, yet we shall err egregiously, if we regard them as ends, and not as means. A forgetfulness of this distinction would send the mass of our children of both sexes into the world, scantily provided either with the ability or the disposition to perform even the most ordinary duties of life. Common Schools derive their value from the fact, that they are an instrument, more extensively applicable to the whole mass of the children, than any other instrument ever yet devised. They are an instrument, by which the good men in society can send redeeming influences to those children, who suffer under the calamity of vicious parentage and evil domestic associations. The world is full of lamentable proofs, that the institution of the family may exist for an indefinite number of generations, without mitigating the horrors of barbarism. But the institution of Common Schools is the offspring of an advanced state of civilization, and is incapable of coexisting with barbarian life, because, should barbarism prevail, it would destroy the schools, should the schools prevail, they would destroy barbarism. They are the only civil institution, capable of extending its beneficent arms to embrace and to cultivate in all parts of its nature, every child that comes into the world. Nor can it be forgotten, that there is no other instrumentality, which has done or can do so much, to inspire that universal reverence for knowledge, which incites to its acquisition. Still, these schools are means and not ends. They confer instruments for the acquisition of an object, but they are not the object itself. As they now are, or indeed, are ever likely to become, our young men and young women will be most insufficiently prepared to meet the various demands which life will make upon them, if they possess nothing but what these schools bestow.

In my last Report, I communicated to the Board some general facts respecting the lamentable prevalence of mechanical, instead of

intelligent, reading in our schools ;—from which it appeared, that the exercise of reading, to which so much time is devoted, was, to a woful extent, performed by the machinery of the organs of speech, and hence was unaccompanied by any vital, receiving, assorting, adjudicating action of the mind. I also briefly indicated the difference between the vast amount of knowledge, which can be acquired through the medium of intelligent reading, compared or contrasted, with the scantiness of information, obtainable in all other ways ;—showing, that without the ability to read, our knowledge is confined to a mere handbreadth of space, and to a mere span of time ; while with this ability, we are enlarged from our imprisonment into a region that has no circumference,—we are endued with a power of being present, at pleasure, with the distant and the past,—we can visit, with the rapidity of thought, any nation or spot on the surface of the globe, and become the coeval of time, and a contemporary with the great names and events of all historic eras.

Having, then, the object of a powerful and an exemplary people in view, the next step in the inquiry is obviously this ;—after the rising generation have acquired habits of intelligent reading in our schools, *what shall they read ?*—for with no books to read, the power of reading will be useless, and with bad books to read, the consequences will be as much worse than ignorance, as wisdom is better. What books, then, are there, accessible to the great mass of the children in the State, adapted to their moral and intellectual wants, and fitted to nourish their minds with the elements of uprightness and wisdom ? This is the principal, the ultimate inquiry ; the other was strictly preliminary to this, and without it, comparatively useless.

Let any person go into one of our country towns or districts, of average size, consisting, as most of them do, of an agricultural population, interspersed with mechanics and here and there a few manufacturers, and inquire, from house to house, what books are possessed, and he will probably find the Scriptures, and a few school books in almost every family. These are protected by law, even in the hands of an insolvent ; so that the poor are as secure in their possession as the rich. In the houses of professional men,—the minister, the lawyer, the physician,—he would find small professional libraries, intermixed with some miscellaneous works, not of a professional character ;—in the houses of religious persons, a few religious books, of

this or that class, according to the faith of the owner ;—in the houses of the more wealthy, where wealth is fortunately combined with intelligence and good taste, some really useful and instructive books, but where the wealth is unfortunately united with a love of display, or with feeble powers of thought, he would find a few elegantly bound Annuals, and novels of a recent emission. What he would find in other houses,—and these the majority,—would be few, and of a most miscellaneous character ; books which had found their way thither, rather by chance than by design, and ranging in their character between very good and very bad. Rarely, in such a town as I have supposed, will a book be found, which treats of the nature, object and abuses of different kinds of governments, and of the basis and constitution and fabric of our own ; or one on economical or statistical science ; or a treatise on general ethics and the philosophy of the human mind ; or popular and intelligible explanations of the applications of science to agriculture and the useful arts,—or the processes by which the latter are made so eminently serviceable to man. Rarely will any book be found, partaking of the character of an Encyclopædia, by a reference to which thousands of interesting questions, as they daily arise, might be solved, and great accessions to the stock of valuable knowledge be imperceptibly made ;—quite as rarely will any books containing the Lives of Eminent British or American Statesmen be found, or books treating of our ante-revolutionary history ;—and most rarely of all, will any book be found on Education,—education at home,—physical, intellectual, and those rudiments of a moral and religious education, in which all agree,—the most important subject, that can possibly be named to parent, patriot, philanthropist, or christian. And in the almost total absence of books, adapted to instruct parents how to educate their children, so, there are quite as few which are adapted to the capacities of the children themselves, and might serve, in some secondary degree, to supply the place of the former. Some exceptions would of course be expected, where so many particulars are grouped under so few heads ; but, from all I have been able to learn ; after improving every opportunity for inquiry and correspondence, I am led to believe, that, as it regards the *private* ownership of books, the above may be taken as a fair medium for the State. In small towns, almost wholly rural in their occupations, the books,



though fewer, may generally be better ; while in cities and large towns, though more numerous, yet a larger proportion of them is worse. Whatever means exist, then, either for inspiring or for gratifying a love of reading in the great mass of the rising generation, are mainly to be found, if found at all, in public libraries.

As the tastes and habits of the future men and women, in regard to reading, will be only an enlargement and expansion of the tastes and habits of the present children, it seemed to me one of the most desirable of all facts, to learn, as far as practicable, under what general influences, those tastes and habits are now, daily, forming. For who can think, without emotion, and who can remain inactive under the conviction, that every day which now passes, is, by the immutable law of cause and effect, predestinating the condition of the community, twenty, thirty, or forty years hence ; that the web of their character and fortunes is now going through the loom, to come out of it, at that time, of worthy or of worthless quality, beautified with colors and shapes of excellence, or deformed by hideousness, just according to the kind of the woof which we are daily weaving into its texture ? Every book, which a child reads with intelligence, is like a cast of the weaver's shuttle, adding another thread to the indestructible web of existence.

In the general want of private libraries, therefore, I have endeavored to learn what number of public libraries exist ; how many volumes they contain, and what are their general character, scope and tendency ; how many persons have access to them, or,—which is the most material point,—how many persons do *not* have access to them ;—and finally, how many of the books are adapted to prepare children to be free citizens and men, fathers and mothers, even in the most limited signification of those vastly comprehensive words. It seemed to me, therefore, that nothing could have greater interest or significance, than an inventory of the means of knowledge, and the encouragements to self-education, possessed by the present and the rising generation.

Simultaneously with this inquiry, I have pursued a collateral one,—not so closely, although closely,—connected, with the main object. A class of institutions has lately sprung up in this state, universally known by the name of *Lyceums*, or *Mechanics' Institutes*,



before some of which, courses of Popular Lectures, on literary or scientific subjects, are annually delivered, while others possess libraries and reading-rooms, and in a very few cases, both these objects are combined. These institutions have the same general purpose in view, as public libraries, viz. ; that of diffusing instructive and entertaining knowledge, and of exciting a curiosity to acquire it ; though they are greatly inferior to libraries, in point of efficiency. As the proportion of young persons, who attend these lectures, and frequent these reading-rooms, compared with the whole number of attendants, is much greater than the proportion they bear to the whole people, the institutions may justly be regarded as one of the means, now in operation, for enlightening the youth of the State. At any rate, an inventory of the means of general intelligence, which did not include these institutions, would justly be regarded as incomplete.

For the purpose of obtaining authentic information on the above-mentioned subjects, I addressed to school committees and other intelligent men residing, respectively, in every town in the Commonwealth, the following statement and inquiries :—

“ Among the ‘ means of Popular Education,’ respecting which it is my duty to seek for information, is the existence of Town, Social, or District School Libraries, composed of books, suited to the wants of children and youth, and adapted to their state of mental advancement. Other means of Popular Education are to be found in Mechanics’ Institutes, and Lyceums, Literary Societies, or Associations under any name, instituted for the delivery of courses of Popular Lectures.

“ As it would be highly useful and interesting to know what means exist, either for cultivating or gratifying habits of reading among the young ; and also to what extent persons of a more advanced age avail themselves of the researches and attainments of other minds, through the medium of regular courses of Lectures, on literary or scientific subjects, I take the liberty to propose the following questions :

“ 1. Is there in your town, any Town, Social, or District School Library ?

“ 2. If so, how many, what number of volumes do they contain, and what is their present value, as nearly as you can estimate it ?

“ 3. What number of persons have a right of access to them ?

“ 4. Are the books of which they consist, adapted to the capacities of children and youth, and have they good intellectual and moral tendencies ? Please be as particular as your convenience will allow respecting the character of the books.

"5. Have you any Mechanics' Institute in your Town, either with or without reading-rooms ?

"6. If any, what number of members belong to it ?

"7. Have you Lyceums, Literary Societies, or Associations under any name, before which courses of Popular Lectures on literary or scientific subjects, have been delivered within the year last past ?

"8. If any, what number of persons have usually attended the lectures ?

"9. What amount of money has been expended for Lectures, within the last year ?

"10. What is the probable amount of the incidental expenses for Lecture rooms, fuel, lights, attendance, &c. ?

"11. At what time were the above institutions established, and are they in a flourishing or declining condition ?"

*The following is an account of the libraries in the different counties of the State.*

### SUFFOLK COUNTY.

Population (May, 1837,) . . . 81,984.

No. of Social Libraries,	. . . . .	36
No. of vols.,	. . . . .	81,881
Estimated value,	. . . . .	\$130,055 00
No. of proprietors, or persons having access in their own right,	. . . . .	8,885

Thirty-two thousand of these volumes belong to the Boston Athenæum.

In addition to the above there are ten Circulating Libraries, containing about twenty-eight thousand volumes, and estimated to be worth about ten thousand dollars. About three thousand two hundred persons are supposed to have taken books from these libraries, during the last year.

There are fifteen common, or district school libraries, in the city, which is almost one-third part of the whole number in this State.\*

\* For the numerous individual facts, of which the above is the aggregate, I am principally indebted to the Hon. Samuel A. Eliot, Mayor of the city, and *ex officio* chairman of the school committee,—who caused them to be collected for me. From the same source, I also derived the facts respecting the Lyceums and Lectures in the city.

## ESSEX COUNTY.

Population (May, 1837,) . . . 93,689.

No. of Social Libraries,	.	.	.	.	31
No. of volumes,	.	.	.	.	22,597
Estimated value,	.	.	.	.	\$20,383 00
No. of proprietors and persons, having access in their own right.	.	.	.	.	2,435

One town has made no return, viz. Salisbury; population, 2,675.

These libraries include the Salem Athenæum, which contains 8,000, and the library of the Salem Mechanics' Association; which contains 1,800 volumes.

## MIDDLESEX COUNTY.

Population (May, 1837,) . . . 98,565.

No. of Social Libraries,	.	.	.	.	43
No. of vols.,	.	.	.	.	18,957
Estimated value,	.	.	.	.	\$6,403 00
No. of proprietors, or persons having access in their own right,	.	.	.	.	3,694

Eight towns have made no returns, viz.:—Acton, population, 1,071; Bedford, pop. 858; Chelmsford, pop. 1613; Malden, pop. 2303; Pepperell, pop. 1586; Sherburne, pop. 1073; Sudbury, pop. 1388; Townsend, pop. 1749. Total population not heard from in Middlesex Co., 11,641.

## WORCESTER COUNTY.

Population (May, 1837), . . . 96,551.

No. of Social Libraries,	.	.	.	.	54
No. of vols.	.	.	.	.	11,134
Estimated value,	.	.	.	.	\$7,038 00
No. of proprietors, or persons having access in their own right,	.	.	.	.	2,912

One town has made no return, viz. :—Hubbardston; pop. 1780.

## HAMPSHIRE COUNTY.

Population (May, 1837,) . . .	30,413.
No. of Social Libraries, . . . . .	17
No. of vols. . . . .	3,339
Estimated value, . . . . .	\$2,415 00
No. of proprietors, or persons having access in their own right, . . . . .	626

## HAMPDEN COUNTY.

Population (May, 1837,) . . .	33,627.
No. of Social Libraries, . . . . .	17
No. of vols., . . . . .	5,173
Estimated value, . . . . .	\$3,698 00
No. of proprietors, or persons having access in their own right, . . . . .	492

## FRANKLIN COUNTY.

Population (May, 1837,) . . .	28,665.
No. of Social Libraries, . . . . .	11
No. of vols., . . . . .	4,092
Estimated value, . . . . .	\$2,905 00
No. of proprietors, or persons having access in their own right, . . . . .	1,147

One town has made no return, viz. :—Sunderland ; population, 729.

## BERKSHIRE COUNTY.

Population (May, 1837,) . . .	39,101.
No. of Social Libraries, . . . . .	17
No. of vols., . . . . .	3,780
Estimated value, . . . . .	\$2,259 00
No. of proprietors, or persons, having access in their own right, . . . . .	405

Five towns have made no returns, viz. :—Becket, pop. 957 ;  
Clarksburgh, pop. 386 ; Mt. Washington, pop. 377 ; New Marl-

boro', pop. 1,570 ; Windsor, pop. 887. Total population not heard from in Berkshire Co., 4,177.

### NORFOLK COUNTY.

Population (May, 1837,) . . .	50,399.
No. of Social Libraries, . . . . .	30
No. of vols., . . . . .	14,331
Estimated value, . . . . .	\$7,567 00
No. of proprietors, or persons having access in their own right, . . . . .	2,591

### BRISTOL COUNTY.

Population (May, 1837,) . . .	58,152.
No. of Social Libraries, . . . . .	8
No. of vols., . . . . .	5,725
Estimated value, . . . . .	\$5,280 00
No. of proprietors, or persons having access in their own right, . . . . .	822

### PLYMOUTH COUNTY.

Population (May, 1837,) . . .	46,253.
No. of Social Libraries, . . . . .	27
No. of vols., . . . . .	5,359
Estimated value, . . . . .	\$2,602 00
No. of proprietors, or persons having access in their own right, . . . . .	930

### BARNSTABLE COUNTY.

Population (May, 1837,) . . .	31,109.
No. of Social Libraries, . . . . .	6
No. of vols., . . . . .	1,110
Estimated value, . . . . .	\$933 00
No. of proprietors, or persons having access in their own right, . . . . .	310



## DUKES' COUNTY.

Population (May, 1837,) . . .	3,785.
No. of Social Libraries, . . . . .	1
No. of vols., . . . . .	250
Estimated value, not given.	
No. of proprietors, or persons having access in their own right, . . . . .	56

## NANTUCKET COUNTY.

Population (May, 1837,) . . .	9,048.
No. of Social Libraries, (Athenæum.) . . . . .	1
No. of vols., . . . . .	2,300
Estimated value, not given.	
No. of proprietors, or persons having access in their own right, . . . . .	400

## RECAPITULATION.

Aggregate of Social Libraries in the State, . . .	299
No. of vols. . . . .	180,028
Estimated value, . . . . .	\$191,538 00
No. of proprietors, or persons having access in their own right, . . . . .	25,705
No. of towns not heard from, . . . . .	16
Total population not heard from, . . . . .	20,966

In addition to the above, there are, in the State, from ten to fifteen *town* libraries, that is, libraries to which all the citizens of the town have a right of access. They contain, in the aggregate, from three to four thousand volumes, and their estimated value is about fourteen hundred dollars.

There are, also, about fifty district school libraries, containing about ten thousand volumes, worth, by estimation, about thirty-two or thirty-three hundred dollars.

The "Coffin School," (incorporated) at Nantucket, has a library of fourteen hundred volumes. A few of the academies have small libraries, but I have not been able to ascertain the number of volumes, or their value.

There are also a few Circulating Libraries in different parts of the State ;—probably the number, out of the city of Boston, does not exceed twenty.

From these results, it appears, that the books belonging to the public Social Libraries in the city of Boston, constitute almost one-half of all the books in the Social Libraries of the State ; and yet, but about one-tenth part of the population of the city, has a right of access to them. If we include the Circulating Libraries, much more than one-half of all the volumes in this class of libraries, is in the city.

If we suppose, that each proprietor or share holder, in the Social Libraries, represents, on an average, four persons, (and this, considering the number of share holders, who are not heads of families, is, probably, a full allowance,) the population, represented by them, as having access to all the Social Libraries in the State, will be a small fraction over one hundred thousand ; leaving a population of more than six hundred thousand, who have no such right of access.

To come as near to exactness as practicable, it ought to be added, that, in a few instances, very small libraries have been referred to in the returns, the particulars respecting which, my informants thought it not worth while to ascertain ; and, also, that in a very few cases, the number of volumes, their value, and the number of proprietors, have been omitted in the returns. Probably, six per cent., added to the above returns, would be an ample allowance for all these omissions. On the other hand, it is to be observed, that, in many cases, the number of books has been taken from the catalogues of the libraries, without any deduction for missing volumes ; and that the same individual has, in some instances, a right in two or more libraries, and, therefore, has been counted, twice or more, as a proprietor.

The number of volumes composing the libraries of the principal public, literary and scientific institutions in the State, is as follows :

Harvard University, including the students' libraries, contains a little more than fifty thousand volumes.

The library of Williams College contains four thousand volumes,

and that of the "Adelphic Union," a society connected with the college, eighteen hundred volumes,—total, five thousand eight hundred volumes.

The college and society libraries at Amherst College, contain thirteen thousand volumes.

The several libraries connected with the different departments of the Institution at Andover, contain but little less than twenty thousand volumes.

The American Antiquarian Society at Worcester has a library of more than twelve thousand volumes. It has fifteen thousand separate tracts, bound up in one thousand and thirty-five volumes, and it has also one thousand two hundred and fifty-one volumes of newspapers.

Thus, omitting the Circulating Libraries, it appears, that the aggregate of volumes in the public libraries of all kinds, in the State, is about three hundred thousand. This is also exclusive of the Sabbath School Libraries, which will be adverted to hereafter. To these three hundred thousand volumes, but little more than one hundred thousand persons, or one-seventh part of the population of the State, have any right of access, while more than six hundred thousand have no right therein.

Of the towns heard from, there are one hundred, (almost one-third of the whole number in the State,) which have neither a town, social, nor district school library therein. What strikes us with amazement, in looking at these facts, is, the inequality with which the means of knowledge are spread over the surface of the State ;—a few, deep, capacious reservoirs, surrounded by broad wastes. It has long been a common remark, that many persons read too much ; but here we have proof, how many thousands read too little. For the poor man and the laboring man, the art of printing seems hardly yet to have been discovered.

The next question respects the character of the books, composing the libraries, and their adaptation to the capacities and mental condition of children and youth. In regard to this point, there is, as might be expected, but little diversity of statement. Almost all the answers concur in the opinion, that the contents of the libraries are not adapted to the intellectual and moral wants of the young ;—an opin-

ion, which a reference to the titles, in the catalogues, will fully sustain. With very few exceptions, the books were written for adults, for persons of some maturity of mind, and possessed, already, of a considerable fund of information ; and, therefore, they could not be adapted to children, except through mistake. Of course, in the whole collectively considered, there is every kind of books ; but probably no other kind, which can be deemed of a useful character, occupies so much space upon the shelves of the libraries, as the historical class. Some of the various histories of Greece and Rome ; the History of Modern Europe, by Russell ; of England, by Hume and his successors ; Robertson's Charles V. ; Mavor's Universal History ; the numerous Histories of Napoleon, and similar works, constitute the staple of many libraries. And how little do these books contain, which is suitable for children ! How little do they record but the destruction of human life, and the activity of those misguided energies of men, which have hitherto almost baffled the beneficent intentions of nature for human happiness. Descriptions of battles, sackings of cities, and the captivity of nations, follow each other with the quickest movement, and in an endless succession. Almost the only glimpses, which we catch of the education of youth, present them, as engaged in martial sports, and in mimic feats of arms, preparatory to the grand tragedies of battle ;—exercises and exhibitions, which, both in the performer and the spectator, cultivate all the dissocial emotions, and turn the whole current of the mental forces into the channel of destructiveness. The reader sees inventive genius,—not employed in perfecting the useful arts, but exhausting itself in the manufacture of implements of war ;—he sees rulers and legislators, not engaged in devising comprehensive plans for universal welfare, but in levying and equipping armies and navies, and extorting taxes to maintain them,—thus dividing the whole mass of the people into the two classes of slaves and soldiers,—enforcing the degradation and servility of tame animals upon the former, and cultivating the ferocity and bloodthirstiness of wild animals, in the latter. The highest honors are conferred upon men, in whose rolls of slaughter, the most thousands of victims are numbered ;—and seldom does woman emerge from her obscurity,—indeed, hardly should we know that she existed,—but for her appearance to grace the triumphs of the

conqueror. What a series of facts would be indicated by an examination of all the treaties of peace, which history records; they would appear like a grand index to universal plunder. The inference which children would legitimately draw from reading like this, would be, that the tribes and nations of men had been created only for mutual slaughter, and that they deserved the homage of posterity for the terrible fidelity with which their mission had been fulfilled. Rarely do these records administer any antidote, against the inhumanity of the spirit they instil. In the immature minds of children, unaccustomed to consider events under the relation of cause and effect, they excite the conception of magnificent palaces or temples for bloody conquerors to dwell in, or in which to offer profane worship for inhuman triumphs, without a suggestion of the bondage and debasement of the myriads of slaves, who, through lives of privation and torture, were compelled to erect them;—they present an exciting picture of long trains of plundered wealth, going to enrich some city or hero, without an intimation, that, by industry and the arts of peace, the same wealth could have been earned, more cheaply than it was robbed;—they exhibit the triumphal return of warriors, to be crowned with honors worthy of a god, while they take the mind wholly away from the carnage of the battle-field, from desolated provinces, and a mourning people. In all this, it is true, there are many examples of the partial and limited virtue of patriotism, but few only of the complete virtue of philanthropy. The courage held up for admiration is generally of that animal nature, which rushes into danger to inflict injury upon another; but not of that divine quality, which braves peril for the sake of bestowing good,—attributes, than which there are scarcely any two in the souls of men, more different, though the baseness of the former is so often mistaken for the nobleness of the latter. Indeed, if the past history of our race is to be much read by children, it should be rewritten, and while it records those events, which have contravened all the principles of social policy, and violated all the laws of morality and religion, there should, at least, be some recognition of the great truth, that, among nations as among individuals, the highest welfare of all can only be effected by securing the individual welfare of each;—there should be some parallel drawn, between the *historical* and the *natural* relations of the race, so that the tender and



immature mind of the youthful reader may have some opportunity of comparing the right with the wrong, and some option of admiring and emulating the former, instead of the latter. As much of History now stands, the examples of right and wrong, whose nativity and residence are on opposite sides of the moral universe, are not merely brought and shuffled together, so as to make it difficult to distinguish between them, but the latter are made to occupy almost the whole field of vision, while the existence of the former is scarcely noticed. It is as though children should be taken to behold, from afar, the light of a city on fire, and directed to admire the splendor of the conflagration, without a thought of the tumult and terror and death, reigning beneath it.

Another very considerable portion of these libraries, especially where they have been recently formed or replenished, consists of novels and all that class of books, which is comprehended under the familiar designations of "fictions," "light reading," "trashy works," "ephemeral," or "bubble literature," &c. This kind of books has increased immeasurably, within the last twenty years. It has insinuated itself into public libraries and found the readiest welcome with people, who are not dependent upon libraries for the books they peruse. Aside from newspapers, I am satisfied that the major part of the *unprofessional* reading of the community is of the class of books, above designated. Amusement is the object ;—mere *amusement*, as contradistinguished from instruction in the practical concerns of life ;—as contradistinguished from those intellectual and moral impulses, which turn the mind, both while reading and after the book is closed, to observation and comparison and reflection upon the great realities of existence.

That reading merely for amusement, has its fit occasions and legitimate office, none will deny. The difficulty of the practical problem consists in adhering to that line of reasonable indulgence, which lies between mental dissipation, on the one hand, and a denial of all relaxation on the other. Life is too full of solemn duties to be regarded as a long play-day ; while incessant toil lessens the ability for useful labor. In feeble health, or after sickness, or severe bodily or mental labor, an amusing, captivating, enlivening book, which levies no tax upon the powers of thought for the pleasure it gives, is a

delightful resource. It is medicinal to the sick, and recuperative to the wearied mind. Especially is this the case, where a part only of the faculties have been intensely exerted. Then, to stimulate those which have lain inactive, brings the quickest relief to those which have been laboring. It is not repose to them, merely ; but repose, as it were, tranquillized by music. But the difference is altogether incalculable and immense, between reading such books as an amusement only, and reading them as restorers from fatigue or as soothers in distress ; between indulging in them, as a relaxation or change from deep mental engrossment, and making their perusal a common employment or business. One enervates, the other strengthens and restores ; one disables from the performance of duty, the other is one of the readiest preparations for a return to it. In reading merely for amusement, the mind is passive, acquiescent, recipient, merely. The subjects treated are not such as task its powers of thought. It has no occasion to bring forth and re-examine its own possessions ; but it is wafted unresistingly along, through whatever regions the author chooses to bear it. It is this passiveness, this surrendering of the mind, that constitutes the pernicious influence of reading for amusement, when carried to excess ; because a series, a reiteration of efforts is just as indispensable, in order to strengthen any faculty of the intellect, as a series of muscular exercises is, to strengthen any limb of the body,—and in reading for amusement, these efforts are not made. Even when we read the most instructive books, and transfer to our own minds the knowledge they contain, the work is but half done. Most of their value consists in the occasions they furnish to the reader, to exert all his own vigor upon the subject, and, through the law of mental association, to bring all his own faculties to act upon it. A stream of thought from his own mind should mingle with the stream that comes from the book. Such reading creates ability, while it communicates knowledge. The greatest accumulation of facts, until the comparing and the foreseeing faculties have acted upon them, is as useless as a telescope or a watch would be, in the hands of a savage. Single ideas may be transferred from an author to a reader, but habits of thinking are intransferable ; they must be formed within the reader's own mind, if they are ever to exist there. Actual observation, within its field, is better than reading, but the advantage

of reading consists in its presenting a field, almost infinitely larger and richer, than any actual observation can ever do ;—yet, if the reader does not take up the materials presented, and examine them one by one, and learn their qualities and relations, he will not be able to work them into any productions of his own ;—he will be like a savage who has passed through the length of a civilized country and just looked at its machinery, its ships and houses, who, when he returns home, will not be able to make a better tool, or build a better canoe, or construct a better cabin than before. It is his own hand-work, on the materials of his art, which, after thousands of trials and experiments, at last turns the rude apprentice into such an accomplished artisan, that his hand instantaneously obeys his will, and in executing the most ingenious works, he loses the consciousness of volition ; and so it is by energetic, long-continued mental application to the elements of thought, that the crude and meager conceptions of a child are refined, and expanded, and multiplied into the sound judgment and good sense of a man of practical wisdom. Something, without doubt, is referrible to the endowments of nature, but with the mass of men, much more is attributable to that richest of all nature's endowments, the disposition to self-culture, through patient, long-sustained effort. No man, therefore, who has not made these efforts, times innumerable, and profited in each succeeding case, by the error or imperfection of the preceding, has any more right to expect the possession of wisdom, discretion, foresight, than the novice in architecture or in sculpture has to expect, that, in his first attempt, he shall be able to equal the Church of St. Peter's, or chisel a perfect statue of Apollo. Now the bane of making amusement the sole object of one's reading, and the secret of its influence in weakening the mind, consist in its superseding or discarding all attendant exertion on the part of the reader. Without this exertion, the power of clear, orderly, coherent thought,—the power of seeing whether means have been adapted to ends,—becomes inactive, and at length withers away, like a palsied limb ; while, at the same time,—the attention being hurried over a variety of objects, between which nature has established no relations,—a sort of volatility or giddiness is inflicted upon the mind, so that the general result upon the whole faculties, is that of weakness and faintness combined.

What gives additional importance to this subject is the fact, that by far the most extensive portion of this reading for amusement, consists of the perusal of fictitious works. The number of books and articles, which, under the names of romances, novels, tales in verse or prose,—from the elaborate work of three volumes to the hasty production of three chapters or three pages,—is so wide-spread and ever-renewing, that any computation of them transcends the power of the human faculties. They gush from the printing-press. Their authors are a nation. When speaking of the reading public, we must be understood, with reference to the subject-matter of the reading. In regard to scientific works on government, political economy, morals, philosophy, the reading public is very small. Hardly one in fifty, amongst adults, belongs to it. For works of biography, travels, history, it is considerably larger. But in reference to fictitious works, it is large and astonishingly active. It requires so little acquaintance with our language, and so little knowledge of sublunary things and their relations, to understand them ; and the inconvenience of failing to understand a word, a sentence or a page is so trivial ;—so exactly do they meet the case of minds, that are ignorant, indolent and a little flighty, that they are welcomed by vast numbers. Other books are read slowly, commenced, laid aside, resumed, and perused in intervals of leisure. These are run through with almost incredible velocity. Take a work on morals, of the same size with a novel ; the reading of the former will occupy a month, the latter will be despatched without intervening sleep. Of works, unfolding to us the structure of our own bodies, and the means of preserving health, and of the constitution of our own minds, and the infinite diversity of the spiritual paths, which the mind can traverse, each bringing after it, its own peculiar consequences ;—of works, laying open the complicated relations of society, illustrative of the general duties belonging to all, and of the special duties, arising from special positions ;—of works, making us acquainted with the beneficent laws and properties of nature and their adaptations to supply our needs and enhance our welfare,—of works of these descriptions, editions of a few hundred copies only are printed, and then the types are distributed, in despair of any further demand ; while of fictitious works, thousands of copies are thrown off at first, and they are stereotyped in confi-



dence that the insatiable public will call for new supplies. It was but a few years after the publication of Sir Walter Scott's Poems and Novels, that fifty thousand copies of many of them had been sold in Great Britain alone. Under the stimulus which he applied to the public imagination, the practice of novel reading has grown to such extent, that his imitators and copyists have overspread a still wider field, and covered it to a greater depth. In this country, the reading of novels has been still more epidemic, because, in most parts of it, so great a portion of the people can read, and because, owing to the extensiveness of the demand, they have been afforded so cheaply, that the price of a perusal has often been less than the value of the light by which they were read.

To give some idea of the difference in the sales of different kinds of works, it may be stated, that of some of Bulwer's and Marryatt's novels, from ten to fifteen thousand copies have been sold in this country ; while of that highly valuable and instructive work, Sparks's American Biography, less than two thousand copies, on an average, have been sold; and of Prescott's Ferdinand and Isabella, only about thirty-six hundred. The latter is considered a remarkably large sale, and is owing, in no inconsiderable degree, to the superior manner in which that interesting history was written.

No discerning person, who has arrived at middle age, and has been at all conversant with society, can have failed to remark the effect upon mind and character, of reading frivolous books, when pursued as a regular mental employment, and not as an occasional recreation;—the lowered tone of the faculties, the irregular sallies of feeling, the want of a power of continuous thought on the same subject, and the imperfect views taken of all practical questions,—an imperfection compounded by including things not belonging to the subject, and by omitting things which do. Any such person will be able to give his attestation to the fact and be willing to advance it into an axiom, that *light reading makes light minds*.

So far as it respects fictitious writings, the explanation of their weakening and dispersive influence, is palpable to the feeblest comprehension. All men must recognize the wide distinction between *intellect* and *feeling*,—between *ideas* and *emotions*. These two classes of mental operations are inherently distinct



from each other in their nature ; they are called into activity by different classes of objects ; they are cultivated by different processes, and as one or the other predominates in the mental constitution, widely different results follow both in conduct and character. All sciences are the offspring of the intellect. On the other hand, there cannot be poetry or eloquence without emotion. From the intellect come order, demonstration, invention, discovery ; from the feelings,—enthusiasm, pathos, and sublime sentiments in morals and religion. The attainments of the greatest intellect are gathered with comparative slowness, but each addition is a permanent one. The process resembles that by which material structures are reared, which are laboriously built up, brick by brick, or stone by stone, but when once erected, are steadfast and enduring. But the feelings, on the other hand, are like the unstable elements of the air or ocean, which are suddenly roused from a state of tranquillity into vehement commotion, and as suddenly subside into repose. When rhetoricians endeavor to excite more vivid conceptions of truth, by means of sensible images, they liken the productions of the intellect to the solidity and stern repose of time-defying pyramid or temple ; but they find symbols for the feelings and passions of men, in the atmosphere, which obeys the slightest impulse and is ready to start into whirlwinds or tempests, at once. To add to the stock of practical knowledge and to increase intellectual ability, requires voluntary and long-sustained effort ; but feelings and impulses are often spontaneous, and always susceptible of being roused into action by a mere glance of the eye, or the sound of a voice. To become master of an exact, coherent, full set, or complement of ideas, on any important subject, demands fixed attention, patience, study ; but emotions or passions flash up suddenly, and while they blaze, they are consumed. In the mechanical and useful arts, for instance, a knowledge of the structure and quality of materials, of the weight and motive power of fluids, of the laws of gravitation, and their action upon bodies in a state of motion or rest, is acquired by the engineer, the artisan, the machinist,—not by sudden intuition, but by months and years, of steady application. Arithmetic, or the science of numbers ; geometry, or the science of quantities ; astronomy, and the uses of astronomical knowledge in navigation, must all have been profoundly

studied,—the almost innumerable ideas, which form these vast sciences, must have been discovered and brought together, one by one,—before any mariner could leave a port on this side of the globe, and strike, without failure, the smallest town or river, on the opposite side of it. And the same principle is no less true in regard to jurisprudence, to legislation, and to all parts of social economy, so far as they are worthy to be called sciences. But that part of the train of our mental operations, which we call the emotions or affections ;—those powers of our spiritual constitution, denominated the propensities and sentiments, which give birth to appetite, hope, fear, grief, love, shame, pride, at the very first, produce a feeling, which is perfect or complete, of its kind. An infant cannot reason, but may experience as perfect an emotion of fear, as an adult. Mankind, for thousands of years, have been advancing in the attainments of intellect, but the fathers of the race had feelings, as electric and impetuous, as any of their latest descendants. In every intellectual department, therefore, there must be accurate observation in collecting the elementary ideas,—these ideas must be compared, arranged, methodized, in the mind,—each faculty, which has cognizance of the subject, taking them up individually, and, as it were, handling, assorting, measuring, weighing them, until each one is marked at its true value and arranged in its right place, so that they may stand ready to be reproduced, and to be embodied in any outward fabric or institution, in any work of legislation or philosophy, which their possessor may afterwards wish to construct. Such intellectual processes must have been performed by every man, who has ever acquired eminence in the practical business of life ; or who has ever made any great discovery in the arts or sciences,—except, perhaps, in a very few cases, where discovery has been the result of happy accident. It is this perseverance in studying into the nature of things, in unfolding their complicated tissues, discerning their minutest relations, penetrating to their centres, that has made such men as Lord Bacon, Sir Isaac Newton, Dr. Franklin, Watt, Fulton, Sir Humphrey Davy, and Dr. Bowditch,—men, the light of whose minds is now shed over all parts of the civilized world, as diffusively and universally as the light of the sun, and as enduring as that light. And so it is in all the other departments of life, whether higher or humbler ;—not more in the case of the diplomatist, who is appointed an ambassador to manage a difficult

negotiation at a foreign court, than in that of the agent, who is chosen by a town, because of his good sense and thorough knowledge of affairs, to conduct a municipal controversy. It is to such habits of thought and reflection upon the actual relations of things, as they exist, and as God has constituted them, that we are indebted for the men, who know how to perform, each day, the duties of each day, and in any station, the duties of that station ;—men, who, because of their clearightedness and wisdom, are nominated as arbitrators or umpires by contending parties, or whose appearance in the jury-box is hailed by the counsellors and suitors of the court ;—men, whose work has not to be done over again, and whose books or reports do not need *errata* as large as themselves. But the feelings or emotions, so far from being dependant on these intellectual habits, for their vividness and energy, are even more vivid and energetic, when freed from control and direction. The intellect hems in the feelings by boundaries of probability and naturalness. It opposes barriers of actual and scientific truth to their devious wanderings and flights. It shows what things can be, and what things cannot be, and thus arrests the imagination, when it would otherwise soar or plunge into the impossible and the preternatural. The savage, with his uncultivated intellect, has fields for the roamings of fancy, which can have no existence to the philosopher ; just as an idolater has an immensity for the creations of his superstition, which to the enlightened Christian, is a nonentity.

Now, it is the feelings and not the intellect,—the excitable, or spontaneously active powers of the mind, and not its steady, day-laboring faculties,—which the great body of fictitious works appeals to and exercises. Were the whole mass of these works analyzed, and reduced to its component elements, nineteen parts in every twenty, would be found addressed to the emotions and feelings, and not to the reason and judgment. Their main staple and texture are a description of the passions of love, jealousy, hope, fear, remorse, revenge, rapture, despair,—the whole constituting a dark ground of guilt and misery, occasionally illumined by a crossing beam of extatic joy, or almost superhuman virtue. But the trials and temptations described are rarely such, as any human being will fall into ; and the virtues celebrated are such, as few will ever have an opportunity to achieve. Hence, sympathy and aversion, desire and apprehension, are kept at the highest

tension ; but it is upon incidents and scenes, outside of actual life,—not in this world, and often not capable of being transferred to it. In the mean time, the understanding sleeps; the intellect is laid aside. Those faculties have nothing to do, by which we comprehend our position in life, and our relations to society,—by which we discover what our duty is, and the wisest way to perform it. The mind surrenders itself to the interest and excitement of the story, while the powers, by which we discern tendencies and balance probabilities, are discarded ;—nay, those sober thoughts are unwelcome intruders, which come to break the delusion, and to repress an insane exhilaration of the feelings,—until, at last, the diseased and infatuated mind echoes that pagan saying, so treasonable to truth, that it would prefer to go wrong with one guide, rather than right with another,—as though, in a universe which an all-wise Being has formed, any thing could be as well as to go right. In the reports of some of the French hospitals for lunatics, *the reading of romances* is set down as one of the standing causes of insanity.

It is the perusal of this class of works, as a regular or principal mental employment, of which I am speaking ; and it is easy for any one, acquainted with the laws of the human mind, and with the causes, which foster or stint its growth, to predict the effect of such reading both upon the will and the capacity to perform the everyday duties and charities of life. Could all temporal duties be written down in a catalogue, we should find, that private, domestic, in-door duties would constitute vastly the greatest number. The social duties, growing out of relationship, friendship, and neighborhood, would make up the next largest and most important class ;—for, while all others only call upon us occasionally, the demands of these are perpetual. Now, for the appropriate and punctual discharge of these numerous and ever-recurring duties, a knowledge of all the scenes and incidents, the loves and hates, the despairs and raptures, contained in all the fictions ever written, is about as fit a preparation, as a knowledge of all the “ castles in the air,” ever built by visionaries and dreamers, would be to the father of a houseless family, who wished to erect a dwelling for their shelter, but was wholly ignorant both of the materials and the processes, necessary for the work. And the reason is, that, in the regions of fiction, the imagination can have



every thing in its own way,—it can arrange the course of events as it pleases, and still bring out the desired results. But in actual life, where the law of cause and effect pervades all, links all, determines all, the appropriate consequences of good or evil follow from their antecedents, with inevitable certainty. The premises of sound or false judgments, of right or wrong actions, being given, the course of nature and Providence predestines the conclusions of happiness or misery, from which we cannot escape. Hence, the mind,—which, in the world of imagination, has been relieved from all responsibility for consequences, being rigorously held to abide by consequences whenever it descends to sublunary affairs, and being ignorant of the connexion between causes and effects,—finds all its judgments turned into folly, and all its acts terminating in disaster or ruin.

Nor are the *moral* effects of this kind of reading, when systematically pursued, less pernicious than the intellectual ; for it will be found that those, who squander their sympathies most prodigally over distresses that were never felt, are the firmest stoics over calamities actually suffered. The inveterate novel reader will accompany heroes and heroines to the ends of the earth, and in tears bewail their fancied misfortunes ; while he can command the serenest equanimity over sufferings in the next street or at the next door. The continued contemplation of pain, without any accompanying effort to relieve it, forms the habit of dissociating feeling from action, and presents the moral anomaly of one, who professes to feel pity but withholds succor. In all healthy minds, judicious action follows virtuous impulse. Nor do the splendid heroes of romance ever earn their greatness and their honors, by a youth of study and toil, by contemning the seductions of inglorious ease ;—and thus they never hold out to the young mind the example of industry, and perseverance, and self-denial, as the indispensable prerequisites to greatness. Far more baneful are the effects, when characters, whose lives are immersed in secret profligacy, are varnished to the eye of the world, by wealth and elegance ; or when audacious criminals are endowed with such shining attractions of wit, and talent, and address, as cause the sympathy of the reader to outweigh his abhorrence.

But, if it is unfortunate that so many people should addict themselves to the reading of fiction, because their minds are immature



and unbalanced, and have no touchstone, whereby they can distinguish between what is extravagant, marvellous and supernatural, and what, from its accordance to the standard of nature, is simple, instructive and elevating ; it is doubly unfortunate, that so many excellent young persons should be misled into the same practice, either from a laudable desire to maintain some acquaintance with what is called the literary world, and to furnish themselves with materials for conversation, or from a vague notion that such reading, alone, will give a polish to the mind and adorn it with the graces of elegance and refinement. In endeavoring to elucidate the manner in which this indulgence entails weakness upon the understanding, and unfits it for a wise, steady, beneficent course of life, in a world so abounding as this is, in solemn realities and obligations, I would most sedulously refrain from uttering a word in disparagement of a proportionate and measured cultivation of what are called polite literature and the polite arts, in all their branches. While we have sentiments and affections, as well as thoughts and ideas ; while, in the very account of the creation of the world, it is said that some things were made to be *pleasant to the sight*, and others good for sustenance ; and while our spiritual natures are endowed with susceptibilities to enjoy the former, as well as with capacities to profit by the latter ; any measures for the elevation of the common mind, which do not recognize the existence and provide for the cultivation of the first class of powers, as well as for the second, would form a community of men, wholly uncouth and rugged in their strength, and almost unamiable, however perfect might be their rectitude. The mind of every man is instinct with capacities above the demands of the workshop or the field,—capacities which are susceptible of pure enjoyments from music, and art, and all the embellishments of civilized life, and whose indulgence would lighten the burden of daily toil. All have susceptibilities of feeling too subtle and evanescent to find any medium of utterance, except in the language of poetry and art, and too refined to be called into being, but by the creations of genius. The culture of these sensibilities makes almost as important a distinction between savage and civilized man, as the training of the intellect ; and without such cultivation, though the form of humanity may remain, it will be disrobed of many of its choicest beauties. Still, in a world, where, by the

ordinations of Providence, utility outranks elegance ; where harvests to sustain life must be cultivated, before gardens are planted to gratify taste ; where all the fascinations of regal courts are no atonement for the neglect of a single duty ;—in such a world, no gentility or gracefulness of mind or manners, however exquisite and fascinating, is any substitute for practical wisdom and benevolence. Without copious resources of useful knowledge, in our young men and young women ; without available, applicable judgment and discretion, adequate to the common occasions and ready for the emergencies of life,—the ability to quote poetic sentiments, and expatiate on passages of fine writing, or a connoisseurship in art, is but mockery. Hence it is to be regretted, that so many excellent young persons, emulous of self-improvement, should commit the error of supposing, that an acquaintance with the institutions of society, with the real wants and conditions of their fellow-men, and with the means of relieving them, can be profitably exchanged for a knowledge of the entire universe of fiction ; or that it is wise, in their hours of study, to neglect the wonderful works of the Creator, in order to become familiar with the fables of men. Intellect must lay a foundation and rear a superstructure, before taste can adorn it. Without solid knowledge and good sense, there is no substance into which ornament or accomplishment can be inwrought. It is impossible to polish vacuity, or give a lustre to the surface of emptiness.

One other general remark is applicable to a large portion of this class of works. Most of them were written in Great Britain for British readers. Hence, they suppose and represent a state of society, where wealth outranks virtue, and birth takes precedence of talent except in extraordinary cases of mental endowment or attainment. They describe two classes of men, which we never ought to have,—one class, whose distinction and elevation are founded on the adventitious circumstances of birth or fortune, and another class who are the ignorant, degraded dependants upon the former ;—but they do not describe any class of industrious, intelligent, exemplary, just and benevolent men, so alive to the rights of others, that under no temptation would they become lords, and so conscious of their own, that under no force, would they remain slaves,—a class of men which we ought to have, and with a proper use of the blessings,

Heaven has given us, we may have. Surely, such books do not contain the models according to which the youth of a Republic should be formed.

I should have felt myself wholly unwarranted in thus commenting upon the prevalence of *amusing* and *fictitious*, compared with *useful* reading, and upon the pernicious consequences of indulgence in it, were it not, that the children of the State are now growing up, in this very condition of things, and under circumstances, too, which will lead them to commit the same error, and, of course, to suffer the same evil, except some new inducements can be found to win them from it. The number of these works, with the number of their readers, is now rapidly increasing,—not absolutely, only, but relatively, and in proportion to other and useful works. The materials of which they are composed have now been so often wrought over, that moderately imitative powers are amply sufficient for recasting them in slightly modified forms ;—originality and invention have ceased to be necessary. The cheapness, too, of this class of works, gives them a preference, not only for circulating, but for town and social libraries. I have been surprised at finding such numbers of them in the catalogues of the latter. I have heard of but one town or social library, from which they have been peremptorily excluded by an article in the constitution. The by-laws of one other library set up a certain standard for books, and empower a committee to burn all the non-conformists ; that is, the non-conforming books. In other places, authority, to dispose by sale of trivial or pernicious books, is given ;—and this leads me to another subject, in regard to the reading of the community, not less important than the preceding.

This subject is presented by the question, what do those persons read, who have not yet risen to the point of appreciating and admiring the better class of fictions and of recent literary works ? A taste for the better kinds of light reading presupposes a preference in the reader's mind, of what belongs to the spiritual, over what belongs to the merely animal part of our nature,—of mental, over sensual gratifications. A knowledge, too, of some of the more obvious phenomena of the material world, and of the operations of the human mind, has made many books ridiculous and contemptible, which once were consulted as oracles, and filled their readers with terror and reverential awe.

The fictions of the last century, whose texture consists of events, monstrous and supernatural, whose machinery is ghosts, hobgoblins, demons and demi-gods—written from one end to the other, in defiance not merely of experience but of possibility, and adapted to the lowest ignorance ;—these, in rare instances only, have been republished. They have been driven from shelves and tables, upon which the feeblest ray of the light of science has been cast. Yet even within the last year, large editions of Dream-Books and Fortune-Tellers have been published. But there is a kind of reading in the community, wholly unknown to the publishers of fashionable novels and of the better sort of ephemeral literature. To those who have not been in the way of knowing, nor in the habit of reflecting, what kind of reading is most congenial and welcome to the least educated portion of the people, and through what channels they are supplied, the facts which have existed and still exist, must be a source of alarm. Numerous itinerant booksellers are constantly on the circuit of the country, offering, from door to door, such books as, in the advancing knowledge and changing tastes of the times, are no longer salable at the bookstore nor inquired for at the circulating library. The precise extent of this traffic, it is impossible to determine ; yet from all I can learn, I am satisfied it is carried on to a very considerable degree, especially in inland towns and in the purlieus of populous places. One gentleman informed me, that in the vicinity of a manufacturing village where he lived, he had seen half a dozen of these book-peddlars in a fortnight. In communications received on the subject of established libraries, mention of similar facts has occasionally been made, although that was not one of the subjects on which information was sought. During the last autumn, I saw, in a beautiful, inland town, the contents of a pedler's vehicle, unladen and arranged in a stall, by the side of the street. I took occasion carefully to examine the books thus exposed for sale. Amongst several hundred volumes, there were not more than two or three books which any judicious person would ever put into the hands of a child, after he could read. The rest consisted of the absurdest novels of the last century, of stories of bucaniers, of pirates and murderers, of shipwrecks, of Newgate calendars, and accounts of other exciting and extraordinary trials, of different sizes and prices to meet the



ability of purchasers. On a temporary counter were spread out bundles of songs, in single sheets, some patriotic, some profane, and some obscene,—to be sold for a cent apiece. Amongst the books were Volney's Ruins and Paine's Age of Reason. At the time of this exposition for sale, a literary festival, occupying two days, was held in the same village ; on which occasion, profound, philosophical, literary, and religious discourses, were delivered to intelligent and gratified audiences. The stall, where the books were sold, was within a stone's throw of the church, where the anniversary was celebrated. Both exercises went on together. The thought, irrepressible on the occasion, was, how much of that immense difference, between those who listened with delight to the eloquence of the discourses and appreciated the instruction they gave, and those who purchased the moral venom to satisfy the cravings of a natural appetite, to which no entertainment of better things had ever been offered ;—how much of this immense difference was perfectly within the power, and therefore within the responsibility of society. Surely such taste, and such books at once to gratify and aggravate it, are not the means wherewith the children in a free government, and of a Christian people, are to lay the ever-during foundations of conduct and character.

The statistics of the other class of institutions, which have the same general object in view as public libraries, viz. Mechanics' Institutes, either with or without reading-rooms, and Lyceums or associations under any name, before which courses of Popular Lectures have been delivered, are as follows ;—the statements referring to the year preceding July, 1839.

#### SUFFOLK COUNTY.

Number of courses of Lectures on literary or scientific subjects, delivered before Lyceums, Literary Societies or associations, during the year preceding July 1, 1839,	.	.	26
Average No. of attendants,	.	.	13,446
Expenses for lectures, including incidental,	.	.	\$11,434 00

The number of lectures, in the above courses, was three hundred and twenty-nine.



In this computation, no notice is taken of any course which did not consist of as many as eight lectures. Short courses, such as those of Messrs. Catlin, Graham, Espy, &c., are not included. The large number of persons attending is to be accounted for by the fact, that the same persons, in some instances, attended two or more of the courses.

## ESSEX COUNTY.

No. of Mechanics' Institutes,	.	.	.	.	3
No. of Members,	.	.	.	.	540
No. of Lyceums, &c.,	.	.	.	.	12
Average No. of attendants,	.	.	.	.	4,385
Expenses for lectures, including incidental,	.	.	.	.	\$2,751 00

## MIDDLESEX COUNTY.

No. of Mechanics' Institutes,	.	.	.	.	2
No. of Members,	.	.	.	.	675
No of Lyceums, &c.	.	.	.	.	24
Average No. of attendants,	.	.	.	.	5,080
Expenses for Lectures, including incidental,	.	.	.	.	\$3,004 00

## WORCESTER COUNTY.

No. of Mechanics' Institutes,	.	.	.	.	1
No. of Members,	.	.	.	.	64
No. of Lyceums, &c.	.	.	.	.	18
Average No. of attendants,	.	.	.	.	3,005
Expenses for Lectures, including incidental,	.	.	.	.	\$539 00

## HAMPSHIRE COUNTY.

No. of Lyceums, &c.	.	.	.	.	3
Average No. of attendants,	.	.	.	.	635
Expenses for Lectures, including incidental,	.	.	.	.	\$75 00

## HAMPDEN COUNTY.

No. of Mechanics' Institutes,	.	.	.	.	1
No. of Members,	.	.	.	.	60

No. of Lyceums, &c.	4
Average No. of attendants,	300
Expenses for Lectures, including incidental,	\$100 00

## FRANKLIN COUNTY.

No. of Lyceums, &c.	5
Average No. of attendants,	450
Expenses for Lectures, including incidental,	\$32 00

## BERKSHIRE COUNTY.

No. of Lyceums, &c.	10
Average No. of attendants,	1,065
Expenses for Lectures, including incidental,	\$136 00

## NORFOLK COUNTY.

No. of Lyceums, &c.	13
Average No. of attendants,	1,355
Expenses for Lectures, including incidental,	\$1,146 00

## BRISTOL COUNTY.

No. of Mechanics' Institutes,	1
No. of Members,	100
No. of Lyceums, &c.	6
Average No. of attendants,	1,060
Expenses for Lectures, including incidental,	\$1,455 00

## PLYMOUTH COUNTY.

No. of Lyceums, &c.	7
Average No. of attendants,	805
Expenses for Lectures, including incidental,	\$327 00

## BARNSTABLE COUNTY.

No. of Lyceums, &c.	5
Average No. of attendants,	570
Expenses for Lectures, including incidental,	\$73 00

## DUKES' COUNTY.

No. of Lyceums, &c.	.	.	.	.	3
Average No. of attendants,	.	.	.	.	140
Expenses for Lectures, including incidental,	.	.	.	.	\$25 00

## NANTUCKET COUNTY.

No. of Lyceums, &c.	.	.	.	.	1
Average No. of attendants,	.	.	.	.	400
Expenses for Lectures, including incidental,	.	.	.	.	\$100 00

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 RECAPITULATION.

No. of Mechanics' Institutes,	.	.	.	.	8
No. of Members,	.	.	.	.	1,439
No. of Lyceums, &c.	.	.	.	.	137
Average No. of attendants,	.	.	.	.	32,698
Expenses for Lectures, including incidental,	.	.	.	.	\$20,197 00

In addition to the above, there are many societies existing in the State, under the names of Lyceums, Debating Clubs, Ciceronian Associations, &c. whose members are aiming at self-improvement, by debating, declamation, reading, composition, &c. &c. Before these, lectures are sometimes, though rarely, delivered. When I have been led to suppose, that the number of lectures has not been as many as five or six for the year, I have not included them in the computation. Owing to occasional vagueness or uncertainty in the answers, I may sometimes have been led into a mistake; but it is believed, that the above result approximates very nearly to the truth. In most country towns, little account is made of incidental expenses. They consist mainly of fuel and lights, which are often contributed by the attendants.

Occasional lectures, or short courses, on the subjects of Peace, Temperance, Abolition, &c. have in no case been included in the above list.

The professed object of these lectures, is the instruction or amusement of persons, who already possess a considerable fund of information, and some maturity of mind. The lecturers seldom deal with rudiments, but suppose their hearers to possess a knowledge of these already. They explain, more in detail, some subject, with which the audience is presumed to have a general acquaintance ; they elucidate some obscure point in history ; or sketch an outline character of some celebrated man ; or present a bird's-eye view of some particular age or people. Occasionally, the lectures are grave and didactic discussions of an important point in philosophy or morals. Some persons attend these lectures, in the true spirit of philosophical inquiry ; others resort to them, as places of amusement for a leisure hour ; some attend them, in order to dignify a life of idleness, with a seeming mental occupation, and others, again, attend them, as they would attend a theatre, or other assembly, where the supposed refinement of the company and not the instructiveness of the occasion, constitutes the attraction. From the nature and object of these institutions, therefore, and from the expectations of those by whom they are sustained, it is obvious that they are neither designed nor adapted for juvenile improvement. To those who are about to cross the loosely-defined line, which separates youth from manhood, these lectures may, to some extent, be interesting and useful. But, however useful they may be, they can never be a substitute for books, even for the youth, and, in no respect can they be so, for children. Even as it regards adults, it is very clear, that, without collateral reading and inquiry, out of the lecture-room, they can obtain only very partial and fragmentary, instead of thorough and methodical knowledge on any subject ; and they will be in no little danger of acquiring superficial, instead of sound views, and of amassing facts merely, instead of penetrating to principles. It is because of this tendency to superficiality,—to make men mistake a few ideas for a system of truth, and twilight for sunshine,—that the whole scheme of Popular Lectures encounters strong opposition from some intelligent men. Their hostility, however, seems too indiscriminate. Although thoroughness and depth of knowledge always possess an immeasurable superiority over mere sketches or outline views ; yet, on subjects, aside and apart from our immediate employment or profession, the most learned

not only may, but must be content, with general notions and a passing acquaintance. It is with the different branches of knowledge, as with the different individuals in society ; we must know thoroughly those with whom we have daily dealings and intercourse, while a power of ready recognition is sufficient for the rest. It is only when the knowledge pertains to our immediate business or avocation, whatever that may be, that dim and floating notions become, not simply useless, but ruinous. Those who object to enlightening the mass of the people in all ways and to any extent, because they must finally stop short of accomplishment and mastership in their attainments, would do well to reflect upon the amount of things, which the most learned man upon earth knows, compared with the amount of which he is ignorant. With regard to many of the laws and operations of nature, going on immediately around us, the keenest vision has not yet penetrated film-deep. All knowledge, even the least, of the constitution of things or of the course of nature, is good and valuable, as far as it extends, provided only, that the possessor knows how little way it does extend.

But it seems undeniable, that the Lyceum class of institutions confers benefits both of a negative and positive character. They win both adults and youth from places, where time would otherwise be misspent, or worse than misspent. They originate acquaintances between persons, who would otherwise remain ignorant of each other, and thus they cultivate social feelings, prevent prejudices from springing up in the mind, and often detach prejudices from it. They supply better topics, and elevate the tone of conversation, and thereby expel from the domestic and the social circle vast quantities of censoriousness, obloquy, and sarcasm against neighbors and townsmen, which, though not legally slanderous, and therefore not subject to legal animadversion, are yet only one grade below technical slander, and make abundant amends in quantity for any deficiency in degree. It has been often repeated by numerous and accurate observers, that in the city of Boston, the general topics of conversation, and the mode of treating them, have been decidedly improved, since what may be called the reign of Popular Lectures.

From the point of view, then, whence I consider them, this kind of institutions possesses great importance ; for, although the children



are now incapable of deriving much direct benefit from it, yet, every passing year is carrying thousands of them within the sphere of its helpful influences.

One fact, almost universal respecting these lectures, is too important to be omitted. Strictly speaking, they are not *courses* ; that is, they are not a connected series ; they do not take up particular subjects, and treat them in such a full, methodical manner, as to make every part of them pervious to the sight of the attendants. On the contrary, the topics discussed are almost as numerous as the lectures. Chance and accident, not order and coherence, determine their succession. The relation between successive lectures is that of contrariety, as often as of resemblance. If bound together, at the end of the course, the series would be not merely miscellaneous, but heterogeneous. The only circumstance of unity between them would be, that they had been delivered on the same evening in the week. The least that can be said of this is, that it does not tend to cultivate a habit of systematic inquiry, or of order in intellectual pursuits. Probably it would be more just to say, that in this way,—especially if the auditors do not follow out the subjects discussed by reflection and collateral reading,—though something may be gained in expansion of knowledge, little will be realized in depth ; that habits of glimpse-catching will be formed, which lead to shallowness, rather than such habits of penetrating and clasping a subject as characterize philosophy. The divergencies into these two paths, may at first seem almost imperceptible ; but their terminations are as wide asunder as wisdom and folly. A vagrant, wonder-hunting mind is as incompatible with sound knowledge and practical good sense, as vagrant habits of life are with thrift and competency. But it is to be hoped that this class of institutions, as well as the public taste which sustains it, is now in a transition state, and that, when it is fully established as one of the media for diffusing intelligence, higher counsels will preside over its management ; and that, at least in regard to all the more important classes of subjects, a regular union of parts into a perfect whole, will succeed to a confusing and dissipating variety.

In addition to lectures before regularly established Lyceums or associations, there is a class of itinerant lecturers, perpetually traversing the country, and professing to expound, in three or four lec-

tures, or sometimes even in a single lecture, the principles of Chemistry, Electricity, Astronomy, or History. A lover of good learning, or any one who has any comprehension of these great subjects, has little to hope from these sources. In one or two chemical lectures, a man may exhibit a little of the flash and glare of the experimental part of the science ; he may change the color of a fluid,—turning a vegetable blue into red, and the red again, into a blue, by the infusion of an acid and an alkali ; but what idea can he convey of the endlessly diversified combinations from simple substances, that make up all the treasures of the earth ; or, of the ever active agencies by which those substances are passing from one combination to another for the benefit of man. And so of Astronomy. What loss do the infinite glory and magnificence of the Creator's works suffer, when vilified by such representations !

Respecting periodicals, newspapers, and occasional printed discourses and addresses, I have no information, not conveniently accessible to any one. In regard to the productions of the daily and periodical press, it may be said, that books cannot be a substitute for them, nor they a substitute for books. They suppose the pre-existence of an extensive and solid frame-work of knowledge in the reader ; and where this exists they furnish valuable materials of fact and opinion to be wrought into it ; but without the pre-existing frame-work, these materials will be mainly lost. Besides, without a power in the reader to sift, examine, compare, and decide for himself, they may be sources of error, as well as of truth.

After adverting to one more subject, I shall have referred to the principal means, now in existence, for the exercise of the intellect and the formation of the character of the whole of the rising generation. The sincere and anxious concern, which has been manifested for the religious education of our children, and the money and time expended for that purpose, in one department of labor, are to be mentioned as the highest eulogium upon the people of the State. The manifestations of this desire are every where to be seen. It has not stopped with words, but has proceeded to deeds. In this Commonwealth, in which the number of churches is larger, in proportion to the population, than in any other State or country in the world, there are, comparatively, but few religious societies, which

have not gathered a Sabbath School, and procured a Sabbath School Library for it. The number of volumes in the Sabbath School Libraries, of one denomination alone, is more than one hundred thousand,—and of another denomination, about fifty thousand. It has been estimated by good judges, that the number of volumes of Sabbath School books, sold in the State and for the use of the children in the State, during the last twelve months, is, about one hundred and fifty thousand. The direct aim of the mass of these books, is to inculcate doctrinal knowledge, and to awaken a spirit of piety in the minds of the young. Through the instrumentality of Bible Societies, by whose agency a Bible or Testament has been placed in the hands of destitute families, and also by the circulation of Tracts, a fund of reading, on the paramount subject of religion, is furnished to the children of the State. Another pertinent consideration is, that societies are already organized and in active operation, whose sole object it is to increase and to supply the demand for religious books.

But, while all will agree, that religious instruction,—properly so called,—is the highest desideratum in the education of children ; there will also be an equal unanimity of opinion, that there are other subjects, embracing the wide range of all those duties and interests, which are denominated domestic, social, economical, political, literary and scientific, which demand the attention and fostering care of every parent, and of every government, claiming to be in any degree parental.

With an aggregate, then, of about one hundred and eighty thousand volumes, in all the Town and Social Libraries in the State, (or only one hundred thousand out of the city of Boston,) to which only one hundred thousand persons have a right of access ;—or, (which is the important point,) to which more than six hundred thousand persons have no right of access ;—with a proportion of at least nineteen twentieths of these volumes, confessedly ill adapted to the wants of children ; with but about fifty school libraries ; with the fact, that, from the very conditions of their existence, our people must obtain their information, mainly, from reading, or must live and die in ignorance ;—the great question arises, whether any further means are necessary to promote the intelligence and encourage the self-culture of the rising generation. On this topic, I wish to submit a few considerations.

Libraries have been less frequently founded within the last twenty years, than for the twenty years before ; so that there are very few collections of which the basis consists of the better modern works. Though reading has increased within the period, first named, it has been more desultory than it formerly was.

Such libraries as do exist, are, almost without exception, located in the centre of the town, and several miles from the remotest inhabitants, so that the inconvenience of going for a book, often decides the question in favor of idleness, or of some useless sport, without one ;—when, could a book be procured in half an hour or an hour, to be read during the residue of an afternoon or an evening, it would not fail to be done. Such fragments of time may seem small, and, individually considered, they are so,—but, in the course of fifteen or twenty years, they amount to months, perhaps, to years ;—or rather they amount to the whole difference between a richly-furnished, and a poverty-stricken mind.

Most of the Social Libraries are encumbered with an admission fee or annual tax, which prevents many people from owning a share in them ; and it furnishes the strongest grounds of exclusion to the poorest people, who have most need of their benefits.

The fact of the existence of so many Sabbath School Libraries, adds another to the reasons for having libraries on other subjects ; so that the religious feeling, when inspired, may find collateral and subsidiary arguments in the religious aspects of science, and be supplied with new evidence and illustrations, from every object on which the eye can rest in the amplitude of nature. No one, for instance, can ever appreciate the argument of the celebrated work of Bishop Butler, who knows nothing of the course of human events, or of the laws which govern the external world. Besides, there is no doubt that, out of a wide variety of subjects, some one would excite a taste for reading in many young minds, which might afterwards be turned to the reading of serious books, when, without some such propitious influence, it would be almost hopeless to attempt its formation.

Of the blessings that would flow from establishing libraries, in places convenient and central for all the children in the State, to radiate light and warmth upon all their intellects and all their hearts, no adequate conception can be formed by any finite mind. Years of



time,—and if we look at all the tens of thousands of children in the State, the aggregate will amount to centuries,—would be redeemed from sloth, from a waste of the all-precious hours of youth, in volatile amusements, in the gratification of appetite, or in fashionable dissipation ;—a devotion to which is never found in conjunction with habits of reflection, with usefulness, with sound practical views on the most important subjects of life,—for the laws of nature have disjoined them, and placed them in opposition to each other, as the East is to the West. Although in education, the harvest necessarily comes long after the seed-time, yet there are few parents now living, who would not see its promise and taste its fruits. An aged and most intelligent and respectable gentleman, in the interior of the State, in giving me an account of a well selected library of only a hundred and fifty volumes, formed in the year 1812, “for youth in their minority,” says, “Its influence in the formation of more than two hundred youth, never can be appreciated. Its weight in the purest gold, distributed among the same youth, would have been but dross, in comparison with the library, even if no other world but the present, is respected. The books are, literally, *used up*. The remnant, worth but ten dollars.”

How few parents there are, who, in looking back to the days of their own childhood and minority, find no occasion to lament,—now when the injury is irreparable,—the want of early opportunities for laying up a store of valuable knowledge ; and the loss of time,—now irrecoverable,—consequent upon that want ! How many feel, daily, that their power of thinking, and especially of expressing their thoughts in speech or in writing, has, all their life long, been obstructed and deadened, from an absence of facilities for information and of incitements to study, in early life. For the parents themselves, these regrets come too late. The losses belong to a class, for which even repentance brings no remedy. And the question is, whether these same parents shall suffer their own children to grow up under a similar privation, to be doomed, in their turn, when they become men and women, to the same melancholy retrospect and to the same unavailing regrets.

The people of this State, are, and must, of necessity, continue to be an *industrious* people, or they cannot subsist. Wealthy, as the



State is justly supposed to be, yet, if all the property in it, both real and personal, were equally divided amongst all its inhabitants, it would not amount to more than four hundred dollars apiece. How soon would all this be gone, even to the very soil we tread on, without the annual replenishings of industry. Our soil furnishes nothing of spontaneous growth, and its unrelenting ruggedness can be propitiated only by the offerings of industry. Our people, therefore, as a people, cannot go abroad for information,—for that enlargement of mind and that acquaintance with affairs, which comes from foreign travel, when pursued with an inquiring spirit and an open eye. If the necessity of their condition debars them from visiting other States or countries in quest of knowledge, then knowledge must be brought to them,—to their own doors and fire-sides,—or ignorance is the only alternative,—the ignorance of childhood, darkening into the deeper ignorance of manhood, with all its jealousies and its narrow-mindedness, and its superstitions, and its penury of enjoyments,—poor, amid the intellectual and moral riches of the universe, blind in the splendid temple, which God has builded, and famishing amid the profusions of Omnipotence. The minds, then, of our people, should travel, though their bodies remain at home ; and for these journeyings and voyages, books are an ever-ready and costless vehicle.

With a rugged and unproductive soil, Massachusetts is also by far the most densely populated State in the Union. Hence, for the temporal and material prosperity of her people—for their subsistence even—they are obliged to form an alliance with the great agencies of nature, as auxiliaries in their labor. But nature bestows her mighty forces of wind, and water, and steam, only upon those who seek them through intelligence and skill. The same circumstances, therefore, which seem to have marked out this State as a place of great mechanical, manufacturing and commercial industry, draw after them the necessity of such a wide range of knowledge, as, though always valuable, would not otherwise be so indispensable. To fit the people for prosecuting these various branches of business with success—or even to rescue them from making shipwreck of their fortunes—they must become acquainted with those mechanical laws that pervade the material world. They must become intelligent machinists, millwrights, shipwrights, engineers—not craftsmen merely, but men

who understand the principles upon which their work proceeds ; so that, by the skilful preparation and adjustment of machinery, the sleepless and gigantic forces of nature, may perform their tasks. They must know the nature and action of the elements. They must know the properties of the bodies used in their respective branches of business, and the processes by which rude materials can most cheaply be converted into polished fabrics. They must know the countries whence foreign products are imported, whither domestic products are exported, the course of trade, the laws of demand and supply, what articles depend on the permanent wants of mankind, and therefore will always be in demand, and what depend upon caprice or fashion, and therefore are certain to be discarded soon, for the very reason that they are now in vogue. Now, all these lead out, by imperceptible steps, into mechanical philosophy, the applications of science to the useful arts, civil geography, navigation, commerce, political economy, and the relations which nations bear to each other. Although an individual might learn to perform a task or execute an agency in one of these departments, empirically, that is, by a knowledge of the modes of proceeding, but in ignorance of the principles on which the process depends, yet such individuals never originate improvements or inventions. Like the Chinese, the end of a hundred years, or of a hundred generations, finds them in the spot they occupied at the beginning.

Of those engaged in agriculture,—an interest, intrinsically important and elevated—it may be said, that just in proportion as the soils they cultivate, are more sterile, should the minds of the cultivators be more fertile ; for, in a series of years, the quantity of the harvests depends quite as much upon the knowledge and skill of the cultivator, as upon the richness of the soil he tills. Take the year round, and the farmer has as many leisure hours as any class of men ; and he has this advantage over many others, that his common round of occupations does not engross all his powers of thought, so that, were his mind previously supplied with a fund of facts, he might be meditating as he works, and growing wiser and richer together.

In fine, there is not, and the constitution of things has made it impossible that there should be, any occupation or employment whatever, where an extended knowledge of its principles, or of its

kindred departments, would not improve products, abridge processes, diminish cost, and impart dignity to the pursuit.

And how without books, as the grand means of intellectual cultivation, are the daughters of the State to obtain that knowledge on a thousand subjects, which is so desirable in the character of a female, as well as so essential to the discharge of the duties to which she is destined? Young men, it may be said, have a larger circle of action; they can mingle more in promiscuous society,—at least, they have a far wider range of business occupations,—all of which stimulate thought, suggest inquiry and furnish means for improvement. But the sphere of females is domestic. Their life is comparatively secluded. The proper delicacy of the sex forbids them from appearing in the promiscuous marts of business, and even from mingling, as actors, in those less boisterous arenas, where mind is the acting agent, as well as the object to be acted upon. If then, she is precluded from these sources of information, and these incitements to inquiry; if, by the unanimous and universal opinion of civilized nations, when she breaks away from comparative seclusion and retirement, she leaves her charms behind her; and if, at the same time she is debarred from access to books, by what means, through what channels, is she to obtain the knowledge so indispensable for the fit discharge of maternal and domestic duties, and for rendering herself an enlightened companion for intelligent men? Without books, except in cases of extraordinary natural endowment, she will be doomed to relative ignorance and incapacity. Nor can her daughters, in their turn, escape the same fate; for their minds will be weakened by the threefold cause of transmission, inculcation, and example. Steady results follow from steady causes;—under such influences, therefore, if not averted, the generations must deteriorate from the positive to the superlative in mental feebleness and imbecility.

But far above and beyond all special qualifications for special pursuits, is the importance of forming to usefulness and honor, the capacities which are common to all mankind. The endowments that belong to all, are of far greater consequence than the peculiarities of any. The practical farmer, the ingenious mechanic, the talented artist, the upright legislator or judge, the accomplished teacher, should be only modifications or varieties of the original *man*. The man is the trunk; occupations and professions are only

different qualities of the fruit it should yield. There are more of the same things to be taught to all, and learned by all, than there are of different things to be imparted, distributively, to classes consisting of a few. The development of the common nature ; the cultivation of the germs of intelligence, uprightness, benevolence, truth, that belong to all ;—these are the principal, the aim, the end,—while special preparations for the field or the shop, for the forum or the desk, for the land or the sea, are but incidents.

In the first place, it is requisite that every man, considered merely as a man, and without reference to station or occupation, should know something of his own bodily structure and organization, of whose marvellous workmanship it is said, that it is fearfully and wonderfully made,—*wonderfully*, because the infinite wisdom and skill, manifested in the adjustment and expansion of his frame, tend to inspire the mind with devotion and a religious awe ;—and *fearfully*, because its exquisite mechanism is so constantly exposed to peril and destruction, from all the objects and elements around him, that precaution or fear is the hourly condition of his existence.

Did each individual know,—what, with a few suitable books he might easily learn,—on what observances and conditions the Creator of the body has made its health and strength to depend ;—did he know that his corporeal frame is a general system, made up by the union of many particular systems,—the nervous, the muscular, the bony, the arterial, the venous, the pulmonary, the digestive,—that all these bear certain fixed relations to each other, and to the objects and elements of the external world ;—it is inconceivable, how much of disease and pain and premature death would be averted,—from how much imposition he would be saved, and how much the powers of useful labor, and the common length of life would be increased. Even from the extension of knowledge on these subjects within the last century, the average length of life has increased one quarter ; and yet it now reaches to but little more than half of threescore years and ten. How many persons, annually, are killed by the carbonic gas of burning charcoal, when, did they know of its existence, or how it is formed, they would as soon swallow arsenic, as inhale it ! How much property is annually destroyed by spontaneous combustion, through an ignorance of the circumstances that cause it !



What a population of spectres, and ghosts, and apparitions has been driven from the abodes of all intelligent men, and might be annihilated with regard to all mankind, by a knowledge of the reflection and refraction of light, and of a few other simple laws of nature ! Those terrific races, that once swarmed the earth, have ceased their visits, where a few of those principles of science are understood, which every child, if supplied with the means, might easily learn. How pertinaciously have the most diffusive blessings been resisted,—such as the use of lightning conductors, and vaccination,—because devout, but ignorant people supposed, that to ward off death, when it came under violent forms, was an impious defiance of the will of Heaven ;—as though it were not the primary will of Heaven that we should use the means of self-preservation, which it has graciously given us. It is not long since, that in one of our most intelligent cities, a splendid granite church took fire, and when it was found impossible to extinguish the flames in its interior, the chief-engineer forbade the engine-men to play upon the walls, because he well knew, that water thrown upon heated granite would decompose it, and he wished to save the materials ; but hundreds of others, ignorant of this fact, but only knowing that the engineer belonged to a different religious denomination from the worshippers at the church, attributed the prohibition to his spite against an opposing sect of Christians ; and while he took the measure which alone could save the property, they supposed he was maliciously delighting himself with the sight of its destruction. In Scotland, during the last century, the introduction of mills for winnowing grain, was violently opposed. The whole argument took a theological cast. It was urged on one side, that the use of a winnowing mill, was a resistance of the Divine will, because it prevented the wind from “ blowing where it listeth.” But on the other side, it was gravely answered, that to prevent the wind from “ blowing where it listeth,” only contravened the will of the “ Prince of the power of the air,” and was, therefore, not only lawful but laudable. Profit and convenience coming to the support of the latter argument, it prevailed. These are specimens, only of the most gross and sottish ignorance. Its less palpable forms are indefinitely more numerous, and their consequences, in the aggregate, indefinitely more disastrous. Let any one read such a work as that



of Dick "On the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge," and he will be able to form some idea, how intimately the private, personal happiness of a people is connected with its intelligence.

But these illustrations are endless. The real fact to be pondered is, that without diffusing information amongst the people, we shall go on in the same way, smiling at the follies of the last generation, and furnishing anecdotes for the next. There are innumerable ways, in which a knowledge of the material world would gladden the obscurest dwelling in the land, and disburden the heart of the humblest individual, of fears, anxieties and sorrows. There are innumerable ways, in which an instructed and enlightened man turns the course of nature to his profit, and delight, and daily comfort, which an ignorant man would no more think of, than a savage would think of burning anthracite coal in the winter, to warm him, and of preserving ice over summer, to cool him.

All children might learn something of Natural History. This department presents an immense variety of objects, calculated to develop their observing and comparing faculties, at a period of life when these faculties are more active than ever afterwards, and to store the mind with an abundance of materials, for the judging and reasoning powers to act upon. To portions of this class of objects, divines and moralists are perpetually referring, in order to illustrate the power, and wisdom, and perfections of God; and yet, how nearly lost are all such illustrations upon minds that know nothing of those laws of vegetable life, which clothe "the lilies of the field" in a beauty beyond the regal glory of Solomon,—nor of that animal mechanism that saves the "sparrow" from falling.

The biography of great and good men, is one of the most efficient of all influences in forming the character of children; for as they are prone to imitate what they admire, it unconsciously directs, while it delights them. Let the mind be supplied with definite, exact ideas, on any subject, and we all know by experience, that when an analogous case arises, the related ideas with which we were familiar before, will instantaneously spring up in the mind, by the law of association. And when correct ideas present themselves spontaneously in this way, they are, to say the least, far more likely to be embodied in action, than if they had first to be laboriously

sought out. Especially is this true in emergencies ; and how many of the follies and imprudences of men are first committed on emergencies, so sudden as to exclude reflection. On such occasions, to have prototypes of moral excellence in the mind, is something like having precedents or examples, in the practical concerns or business of life. Although it is a great truth, that all minds have the capacity of distinguishing between right and wrong, yet life presents innumerable instances where the application of these principles is attended with serious difficulty ;—in such cases, mere ignorance is always the source of error, and often of ruin. And how many excellent men have lived, how many illustrious examples have been set, of which only a very few of the more favored children of this State have ever heard ;—all others, therefore, being not so much as invited to follow in the same radiant paths. Why should the examples of benevolence, of probity, of devotion to truth, be lost to so many of our children, whom they might fire with a corresponding love of excellence ! Here are real examples of real men, and are, therefore, possible and imitable ; and to the unsophisticated mind of a child, there is as great a difference between real and fictitious personages, as there is to a merchant, between real and fictitious paper. There never was such an argument, in favor of furnishing biographical and scientific truth for children, and against that mass of fictions which are given them, for true stories and not as media or illustrations merely, as the simple question, which ingenuous children so often ask, when reading or hearing a narrative, *Is it true ?* It ought to be remembered, that in all the objects and operations of nature, and in the lives of genuine men, we converse with God and with the course of his providence, *at first hand*, and not with mock-shows, and counterfeits, and hearsays.

There is another kind of reading, which all must admit to be of the very highest importance to our citizens, and of which they are almost universally ignorant ;—I mean our ante-revolutionary history. Few, even of our educated men, can claim any familiarity with it ; yet there, our free institutions germinated. Never, in any other place, nor at any other time, have the great principles of civil and religious liberty been so ably discussed, or been sustained by such heroic trials and sacrifices, as between the first colonization of this country

and the peace of 1783. Our country's independence—the birth of a free people—one of the greatest epochs in the history of the human race—was the result. Every boy, who is not ruined by a false course of instruction, passes through a state of mind, between the ages of sixteen and twenty-one, when a study of the principles and deeds, recorded in that history, would give him some adequate idea what Liberty and Law are, what they have cost, and what they are worth.

But, when we turn from the outward and material world to the inward and spiritual life, a wider field for improvement opens before us;—for, out of the invisible recesses of the mind, come all the mighty changes wrought by human power. When an uninstructed person looks upon the outward form of a man, he thinks nothing of the skilfully adjusted organs, nor of the mysterious functions of vitality, within it. The vibrating nerves, which convey sensation and volition, the contracting muscle, the flowing blood, the health and strength giving processes of nutrition, the dilating lungs, with their adaptations to each other, are all hidden from his untaught gaze. So, when an ignorant man regards the operations of the mind, he discerns only a tumultuary, conflicting tide of wishes and terrors, of pleasures and pains, of doubts and purposes, rising, contending, and subsiding, without order or law. He takes no cognizance of the different powers and faculties with which he has been endowed, of their relative supremacy, of their different spheres of action, nor of their adaptations to his temporal condition; and hence, when he obeys their impulses, it is without the approval of conscience, and when he commands them, it is without the discriminations of reason. Every child, towards the close of his minority, has time and capacity enough, could he be furnished with the means, to acquire much of the knowledge, enjoined in that ancient precept, so universally celebrated and sanctioned, “Know thyself.”

But after all, those blessings of knowledge combined with well directed feelings, which cannot be enumerated, are infinitely more than any language can express. The greater proportion of the stream of every man's life is hidden in the silent breast, and never emerges into utterance or action. Much as any one may be in the company of the world, he is much more in the company of his own

consciousness only. It is the perpetual inflowing of his secret reflections and emotions that mingles sweet or bitter waters in the stream of every man's existence. Whatever reaches the fountains of this stream, is, as far as possible, to be remembered, in plans for human amelioration. Few men have battles to fight, or senates to persuade, or kingdoms to rule ; but all have a spirit to be controlled, and to be brought into subjection to the social and divine law. The intellect forces the great problems of existence, and futurity, and destiny, upon all ; and none will question that much depends upon human means, whether a man shall go through the world and out of it, elated by delusive hopes, or tormented by causeless fears.

Among the agencies, that operate to these momentous ends, books, certainly, occupy a conspicuous place. Whoever has read modern biography, with a philosophic eye to the causes of the extraordinary characters it records, must have observed the frequent references, that are made to some *book*, as turning the stream of life, at some critical point in its course. In one of Dr. Franklin's letters, he says, that, when a boy, he met with a book entitled "Essays to do Good," which led to such a train of thinking, as had an influence on his conduct through life. Sir Walter Scott, in his writings and letters, makes repeated and repeated mention of the fact, that he owed his power of painting past times, to the books which he read when young. The notorious Stephen Burroughs, a native of a neighboring State, relates, in his autobiography, that he was inflamed with military ardor, by the perusal of "Guy, Earl of Warwick," that he ran away from his father, three times,—once before he was fourteen years of age,—and enlisted in a regiment of artillery. Twice he was reclaimed but, at last, he succeeded in escaping ; and, in the camp, it has been sometimes said, commenced his life of ignominy. Whoever looks deeper, sees that that ignominious life commenced when he was reading a pernicious book. It would be easy to fill pages with similar facts. "When I see a house," says Dr. Franklin, "well furnished with books and newspapers," (of course he meant instructive and not mere partisan ones,) "there I see intelligent and well informed children, but if there are no books nor papers, the children are ignorant, if not profligate." It has been frequently remarked by observing men, that towns, in which good libraries have



been established, show a population of intelligence, superior to that of towns where none has existed. In a number of towns, recent attempts to establish libraries for grown people have utterly failed. The men and women, not having acquired a taste for useful reading when children, have lost it for life. Let the same course be followed in regard to the present children, and time is not more certain to bring the day, when they shall be men and women, than it is to bring the same feelings of indifference towards mental improvement. On the other hand, I have never heard of a well selected library for children, which has failed from their want of interest in it.

And in what way, except by furnishing good libraries to the people at large, can the reading of frivolous and useless books, of novels of the baser sort, and of that contaminating and pestilential class of works, which is now hawked around the country, creating moral diseases, or inflaming and aggravating where it finds them, be prevented? These books, no law can destroy or reach. No power of persuasion can ever induce those who have acquired a love of reading them, to abandon what gives them pleasure, without some equivalent of pleasure is proffered in its stead. But a supply of good books would confer far more than an equivalent. It would prove a remedy, where the disease exists, and an antidote, where it threatens. Let good books be read, and the taste for reading bad ones will slough off from the minds of the young, like gangrened flesh from a healing wound. Nor will any severity of legislative enactment, nor any vigilance in the administration of the law, ever succeed in the extirpation of gaming, shows, circuses, theatres, and many low and gross forms of indulgence, without the introduction of some moral and intellectual substitutes.

For the purpose of carrying out a plan of improvement, co-extensive with the wants of the community, and with the limits of the State, no system can be devised at all comparable with the existing arrangement of school districts. Here are corporate bodies, known to the law, already organized and in operation. The schoolhouses are central points of minute subdivisions of territory, which, in the aggregate, embrace every inch of ground in the State. There are but few districts in the State, which comprise more than a space of two miles square. On an average, they include less than that extent



of territory. Here, then, are central points, at convenient distances, distributed with great uniformity all over the Commonwealth,—each one with a little group of children,—the hope and treasure of the State,—dependant upon it for all the means of public instruction, they are ever to enjoy. And these points, though now emitting so dim and feeble a light, may be made luminous and radiant, dispelling the darkness and filling the land with a glory, infinitely above regal splendör. Could the children, who are so widely scattered over the surface of the State,—laboring, even in their tender years, upon its hills and by its water-falls,—could they assemble, and present themselves before their rulers, and be, for a moment, endued with a vision of their coming fortunes, and speak of the life of toil to which most of them have been born, of their poverty in the means of self-cultivation, or, what is worse than poverty,—of their indifference to it ; could they proclaim, that every passing day is uttering the irreversible oracles of their fate, who could resist the appeal ! And can the thought of such an appeal penetrate the heart, with less electric swiftness, because they cannot make it !

Were any mode to be now devised or discovered, by which the soil of the State could be made to yield four-fold its present harvests, with no additional labor or expense ; or, by which, in some new mode of applying water or steam power, a given expenditure of time and money would return quadruple products in value or in quantity,—could there be found a dissenting voice, against its immediate adoption ? Yet, who will venture to say, that one fourth, or even one fortieth part of the mental and moral energies of our children is now put forth and expended in the wisest direction, or for the highest objects ? Were the earth beneath us found to be a rich magazine of mineral treasures, how speedily would the spirit of enterprise invest its capital and ply its enginery, in bringing those treasures to light, and in appropriating them to their respective uses ? Why a more contented wastefulness of moral resources, than of mineral wealth ? Were there wide tracts of the richest soils in the State unreclaimed, how soon would the hand of skilful husbandry enter and till them, and make them teem with luxuriant harvests ? Yet, in the obscurest corners of the land, along the by-ways, and under the humblest roofs, there is buried talent, and the suppressed power of ex-

tended and godlike benevolence. Could a library, containing popular, intelligible elucidations of the great subjects of art, of science, of duty, be carried home to all the children in the Commonwealth, it would be a magnet to reveal the varied elements of excellence, now hidden in their souls.

The State, in its sovereign capacity, has the deepest interest in this matter. If it would spread the means of intelligence and self-culture over its entire surface, making them diffusive as sunshine, causing them to penetrate into every hamlet and dwelling, and, like the vernal sun, quickening into life the seeds of usefulness and worth, wherever the prodigal hand of nature may have scattered them;—it would call into existence an order of men, who would establish a broader basis for its prosperity, and give a brighter lustre to its name,—who would improve its arts, impart wisdom to its counsels, and extend the beneficent sphere of its charities. Yet, not for its own sake only, should it assume this work. It is a corollary from the axioms of its constitution, that every child, born within its borders, shall be enlightened. In its paternal character, the government is bound, even to those who can make no requital. Sacredly is it bound to develop all the existing capacities, and to ensure the utmost attainable welfare, of that vast crowd and throng of men, who, without being known, during life, beyond their neighboring hills,—without leaving any enduring name behind them after death, still, by their life-long industry, fill up, as it were, drop by drop, the mighty stream of the country's prosperity. In the heart of this multitude, dwell capacities of good, and possibilities of evil, wholly transcending the power of finite imagination to conceive. Here are an inconceivable extent and magnitude of interests, sympathies, obligations ;—here are all the great instincts of humanity, working out their way to a greater or less measure of good, according to the light they enjoy ;—and, compared with this wide and deep mass of unrecorded life, all that emerges into history and is seen of man, is as nothing. To a superior being, to whom the world appears as it really is,—whose eye can see through it and round it,—the substance of its weal and woe, lies here ; and ought not the means of knowledge, and the incitements and the aids to virtue, to be co-extensive with this vast expanse and depth of wants and responsibilities ?

Again, it is believed that no barbarous nation has ever been known to history,—amongst whom any form of government had been established,—which had not adopted specific measures to educate the heir of sovereignty, for the discharge of his regal duties. And can the obligation to prepare for the responsibilities, attendant upon power, be less, where all the citizens, instead of one, are born to the inheritance of sovereignty. By our institutions, the political rights of the father descend to his sons, in course of law. But the intellectual and moral qualifications, necessary for the discreet use of those rights, are intransmissible, by virtue of any statute. These are personal, not hereditary ; and are, therefore, to be taught anew and learned anew, by each successive generation. Hence, as the work of education is never done, the means of education should never be withheld ;—as the former must be continually renewed, the latter must, as continually, be supplied.

The instruction and pleasure, which the parents themselves would experience, from the establishment of a good library in their respective districts, are too important to be forgotten, and yet are so obvious, as to need only a passing reference.

It seems to be the unanimous opinion of the teachers of all schools, whether public or private, that a School Library would be a most valuable auxiliary in interesting children in their studies. It would inspire the young with the desire to learn, that they might prepare themselves to enjoy what they saw was prized by others. Several of the rudimental studies could be invested, to the eye of the pupil, with new interest and usefulness by its means. If the facts or sentiments, contained in the reading lessons, could be illustrated or enlivened by some explanation or anecdote from the library, it would often convert a mechanical routine into a living exercise. If, when the scholars come to the name of Socrates, or Luther, or Howard, they could turn to a Biographical Dictionary, and find a summary of the lives and deeds of these men, and ascertain their place in chronology, and in geography, it would give a sense of reality to the business of the school, while, at the same time, it would acquaint them with important facts. And so, of ancient or foreign customs and manners, of memorable events, of remarkable phenomena in nature, &c. Pupils, who, in their reading, pass by names, references, allu-

sions, without searching, *at the time*, for the facts they imply, not only forego valuable information, which they may never afterwards acquire, but they contract a habit of being contented with ignorance. Under the influence of such a habit, the ardent desire for knowledge, which nature kindles in the breast of children, will soon be extinguished, and they will come to resemble the irrational creation, which passes, without thought or emotion, by objects of the greatest curiosity and wonder.

Again, access to some library seems indispensable, in all schools where any attention is paid to composition. The ability to express ideas in writing, with vigor and perspicuity, is now deemed so valuable, that, in many places, Composition has been added to the list of Common School studies. But the earlier exercises of children, in composing, (however it may be with the later,) can consist of little more than rendering other men's thoughts, in their own language. If the most distinguished authors desire to consult books before they attempt the discussion of great subjects, then, to require children to write composition, without supplying them with some resources, whence to draw their materials, is absurdly to suppose, not only, that they are masters of a select and appropriate diction, in which to clothe their thoughts and feelings, but also that they possess a degree of originality, which even the ablest writers do not claim.

For these and other reasons, some of the most judicious and successful teachers, have carried into school any little collection of books, belonging to themselves, and have realized great benefit from it. Such collections, however, must generally be scanty, and can rarely, if ever, be the most appropriate and useful ;—besides, such a practice is, at least, liable to misuse. But a well selected library, —such as that which is now in a course of preparation, under the auspices of the Board,—in which all possible respect is paid to the right of private judgment on questions, concerning which, an unhappy difference of opinion prevails amongst the best men in the community,—such a library would avoid all danger, and increase every benefit. Every legitimate excitement or encouragement, brought to bear upon our children in the schools, not only quickens progress, but diminishes the occasions for discipline.

Finally, from all I have heard and learned, it is my belief, that the



Legislature can do no one thing, which shall be so acceptable to the friends of Common School education in Massachusetts, as to devise some plan by which a school library shall be placed in every district school in the State. By the accomplishment of an object so permanently useful, they will win not only a sincere, but a lasting gratitude. Many of the districts are small, and without some assistance, they may not, for a long time, perhaps never, obtain a library by their own means. When we consider, that the average number of all the scholars, in all the public schools, is less than fifty for each ;—and, also, how many large schools there are in Boston and other cities, and in the central districts of large towns, we shall at once perceive how many small schools there must be. In the majority of instances, the small schools are in the exterior districts of the towns. They draw but little money, because of the small number of scholars which they contain. Hence, they have short schools, and seldom give large compensation to teachers. The fact, that the schools are small, proves that the lands of the district are not very fertile, and also, that it is not a place of much trade or business. Otherwise, the population would be denser and the schools larger. Their means, therefore, cannot be very abundant ; and hence, the necessity for assistance. There is another consideration which must have great weight with all, who desire, as far as is practicable, to furnish equivalents for natural disadvantages. The project of libraries for schools has lately been so much discussed, and has found such general favor with the public, that rich and populous school districts will not long remain without them. This class of large and wealthy districts have much the largest schools ; they are able to offer more liberal compensation to teachers, and if, in addition to these advantages, they possess libraries also, while the districts less favorably circumstanced in point of wealth and population, are destitute of them, the inequality of condition and privileges, already existing, will be still further increased. Every wellwisher of his kind will more cordially coöperate in measures which bring forward those who are in the rear, than with measures which carry still further onward those already in advance. Poverty ought never to be a bar against the attainment of that degree of knowledge, which is necessary for the intelligent performance of every duty in life.

After the munificent endowment by the State of two of its col-



leges, and many of its academies, it is thought that the time has arrived, when something should be done for the broader institution of the schools. Whatever claims may be made by the friends of colleges and academies in their behalf, they cannot deny that the Common School is still more important, because on this basis, the welfare of the whole people more immediately rests. When the State endowed its first university, and visited it, from time to time, for almost two centuries, with substantial proofs of its liberality, it surely did not mean to establish a law of primogeniture in its favor, and to disinherit the younger members of the family, that is, the Common Schools. It is expected, too, by the friends of the schools throughout the State, that those, who have received the benefits and enjoyed the honors of a university education,—which is claimed to exert a humanizing and liberalizing effect upon the mind and character,—will not themselves refute the claim, by a want of liberality towards the only institutions, where the masses can be benefited.

Amongst all the letters, which I have received on the subject of libraries, not one man, in his individual capacity, and but one board of school committee men only, has questioned their desirableness and utility. And the reason assigned in the latter case, was, that the town to which the committee belonged, already possessed a sufficient number of books, accessible to all its inhabitants. The conventions, held in the different counties, have approved and recommended the plan by votes, which, with two exceptions, had not a dissenting voice ; and, in neither of the excepted cases, was there more than half a dozen negative votes. Probably so entire a unanimity would not be found to exist, on any other subject whatever.

In view of these facts and considerations, I cannot close this Report, without suggesting to the Board the expediency of inviting the special attention of the Legislature to this subject, as one which has an important bearing upon the welfare of the present age, and a bearing still more important upon the welfare of coming generations.

HORACE MANN,

*Secretary of the Board of Education.*

BOSTON, DEC. 26, 1839.

# ERRATUM.

Page 77, in the Recapitulation, Expenses for Lectures, &c., instead of \$20,197 00 read \$21,197 00.

Dr. <i>The Massachusetts Board of Education in account current with</i> CHARLES H. MILLS, <i>Treasurer.</i> Cr.				
1839	1839			
July 16,	Sept. 26,	To cash paid "Yeoman's Gazette," bill advertising,	\$5 00	By cash received of E. Dwight, - \$500 00
" "	" 30,	do. "Concord Freeman," do.	5 08	do. His Excellency's warrant on the Treasurer of the Commonwealth, - 500 00
Aug. 10,		do. "Salem Advertiser," do.	10 00	
" 14,		do. "Bunker Hill Aurora," do.	12 37	
" 19,		do. "Massachusetts Spy," do.	12 50	
Sept. 25,		do. "Hampshire Gazette," do.	6 00	
Oct. 24,		do. "Springfield Republican," do.	7 00	
" 25,		do. "Barnstable Patriot," do.	1 50	
" 29,		do. "Boston Recorder," do.	9 00	
" "		do. "Bunker Hill Aurora," do.	1 50	
Nov. 22,		do. "Massachusetts Spy," do.	1 50	
Dec. 2,		do. "Worcester Palladium," do.	12 00	
" 12,		do. "Boston Trumpet," do.	5 63	
" 13,		do. "Salem Advertiser," do.	1 50	
" 21,		do. "Boston Morning Post," do.	30 00	
" 24,		do. do. do.	1 29	
Oct. 5,		To cash paid by order of Jared Sparks, Chairman of the Board of Visitors, to Cyrus Peirce, of Lexington, for outfit of Normal School at that place, - 300 00	121 87	
		One quarter's tuition, to Oct. 3d, - 375 00	675 00	
Nov. 23,		To cash paid by order of His Excellency, to S. P. Newman, of Barre, for outfit of Normal School at that place, - 300 00		
		One quarter's salary, to Dec. 1,—\$350 00		
		Same of S. C. Daman, Assistant, 80 00—430 00		
Dec. 26,	1839	Balance—Cash in Treasurer's hands this day, 2473 13	730 00	
			\$4,000 00	
Boston, Dec. 27th.	Dec. 26,	Examined and approved, being found sufficiently vouched and correctly cast,		By Balance in Treasurer's hands, in cash, \$2473 13
				E. DWIGHT, <i>per order.</i>
				\$4000 00
				\$2473 13

Errors excepted.

BOSTON, Dec. 26, 1839.

CHARLES H. MILLS, TREASURER.



















